





S E R M O N S,

WITH

P R E F A C E S.

BY

W. ULLATHORNE, D.D., O.S.B.

Preach the word : be earnest.—*St. Paul.*

There is no exercise more proper than preaching to extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and to establish the principles of sound philosophy.—*St. Chrysostom.*

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TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN CHRIST,

JOHN BEDE, D.D., O.S.B.,

*Lord Bishop of Hierocæsarea, and Vicar Apostolic of New Holland
and Van Dieman's Land.*

MY DEAR LORD,

To whom should I present these few fruits, collected from my missionary labours, but to you, under whose auspices they have grown? If, from the Bishop, Vicar Apostolic of Wales, I have derived ecclesiastical knowledge, as from an ample source, flowing in clear and continuous streams over every field of sacred learning; from the precepts of your Lordship, illustrated in such perfection by your example, I was taught to imbibe that zeal, without which, all knowledge is of weak avail. You were my first, my constant, and my best instructor in the spirit of the religious life. It was you who early inspired me with that missionary spirit which counts self as nothing in

pursuit of the salvation of immortal souls. And as I was brought up at your feet, so have I since been privileged to walk by your side in the apostolic career, and to be guided by your light.

When, in the fervour of youth, I first went out to New South Wales, it was because, at a yet earlier period, you pointed it out to me as a vast field which God would ere long reclaim ; desolate, because uncultivated, but holding within its bosom the promise of abundant fruit. I can scarcely be said to have preceded your Lordship—your desires went before my steps ; and I went with the intimate conviction that I was destined to be but the pioneer of your apostolic labours. Those your great labours God has greatly blessed. Other portions of your immense jurisdiction you are now engaged in providing for ; but the mission of New South Wales is, by the grace of God, in so flourishing a condition, that it no longer needs such services as I am able to render. Long and painfully reluctant, your Lordship has kindly at last yielded your consent, and allowed me to return to my order, and to that religious obedience, which, beyond all earthly things, I have learned to value. Placed under that obedience, I also feel that there is no country throughout the world which, at this very moment, asks the

labours of the missionary more than our own. Though the world's whole length is about to divide us, I am consoled with the thought that no material bar, however huge, can separate our spirits. A portion of your spirit will labour here in me; I shall be present in your prayers, as you are always present in mine. And whether it be my lot to depart this world before you, or you before me, I am satisfied that, in either case, if God be merciful to me, your prayers will not cease for me until our spirits may be reunited where no world or time can separate.

I am, with the profoundest respect,

Your Lordship's grateful disciple

And faithful servant,

. THE AUTHOR.

COVENTRY,

Feast of St. John, Apostle and Evangelist

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GENERAL PREFACE.

SHOULD some young divine, who has received the gift of zeal, and is inspired with a sense of the spiritual wants of our age and country, be encouraged in his resolves, and aided in his progress, by the tendency and tone of the following remarks, my pen will not have been employed in vain.

The preacher who presents himself in these Sermons is of opinion that we require a new, and a more quickening spirit in our sacred eloquence. This opinion he shares with others. The restless and dissatisfied spirit which is agitating our inquiring countrymen seems to demand it. We have no longer to preach before small and select audiences of pious and faithful Catholics, who clung to their faith through good and ill report, and cheerfully sacrificed all things for the sake of its possession. The minds of far other men, especially in our large towns, are in commotion. Material difficulties and temporal distresses have

quickened intelligence. The extremes of error and truth, with all their intermediate degrees, are engaged in a vivid contest. The thoughts of men have been stirred and set at work from various causes. They are discontented with their condition, and want all kinds of change. They want a solution of their trials, and a place of rest for their distracted souls. Protestantism in all her degrees of negation, and through all her gradations of departure from Catholicism, has been moved to look about her; she has begun to discover that she is isolated and unfruitful; that she is fixed on no firm base; that she is fastened to nothing; that every thing is inconstant, shifting, and unsatisfactory about her; hence, Puseyism is moving in one direction of escape, Socialism, with its frightful doctrine of philosophical necessity, in another. Men look everywhere for some new truth that may be great enough to fill their vacant souls, for some great consolation to quench their thirsting hearts. Catholicism alone comprises all the truth and grace which God has given to man. Each new remove away from it is but a fresh impoverishment. Many souls begin to suspect this; some feel it to their conviction, and only require to be resolved; most are prepared to listen and consider, would but more of our preachers come freely and independently forth, filled with the spirit of their cause, and armed with all those powers that make truth to prevail. The writer presumes not to have attained himself what he so much

desires to see attained by others. Nevertheless, would he fain add his testimony of our wants to the words of those weightier men who have already spoken. He may attempt to aid in wakening up a spirit which he is humbled the more when he considers that he is so far from possessing.

I believe it to be generally allowed that the main defect in the training of our young ecclesiastics, is the want of a more ample cultivation of sacred eloquence. How many means and resources of persuasion lie buried amongst us. Not that with a deliberate negligence they are wrapped up, and laid aside like the talent of the Gospel. For their owners doubt of their existence, or see not how they may be made to fructify the good return. They have never been sufficiently exercised in their use to understand their extent and avail. The soldier draws not his sword for the first time in the contest, but after being exercised in all its resources. The dramatist comes not on the open scene with his first essays, but after laborious rehearsal of his powers. The musician is made familiar with the capabilities of his instrument, and explores its hidden harmonies, before he is judged worthy of his audience. The most powerful weapon is nothing unless powerfully wielded, nor the sweetest instrument unless delicately touched. And no powers are less known and less understood, until labour and occasion draw them forth, than the persuasive powers within the human soul.

Logical acuteness and precision in argument we acquire by their exercise during our course of school divinity. The rules and principles of rhetorical composition we learn in the abstract at least. But in the habitual power of winning the heart to good, and of deeply moving the soul; of drawing her triumphantly from error to truth, and of swaying her irresistibly from wrong to right; it is here we begin to fail. Not assuredly from want of resources: for where else is there found so much of truth, where so universal a harmony of truth, where such sublime imagery for clothing of truth, where such beautiful symbolism for illustration of truth, or such graceful histories for confirmation of truth—where, again, such knowledge of the human heart, which is the receptacle of truth, or so much grace awakening the heart to love and to receive truth, as in the Catholic Church? What other domain presents so many collateral aids to eloquence? Whilst every thing in the Church, even to its material forms and ceremonies, is warm and eloquent, shall only the lips of their interpreter remain cold and uninspired? This is not natural. There must be some adventitious cause in operation to have brought it about. What may that cause be? To me it seems that we have been brought, by insensible degrees, beneath the dominion of the conventional ideas of those among whom we live, and which have come of a spirit adverse to Catholicism. Then, again, we have taken our examples, and drawn most of

our materials, from bodies of discourses which, during their cautious preparation, were subdued to the fastidious taste and artificial refinement of Louis the Fourteenth and his courtiers. The language of a court is not the eloquence for a people. With the French court preachers we have done ourselves considerable injury. Their compositions, admirable as pieces of literature, were calculated for an atmosphere in which the eloquence of the soul could never freely breathe. It is the listening multitude which makes the great orator, remarks Cicero. It is the variety and extent of the field of combat, and the intensity of the contest, that draws forth all his powers. Even Bourdaloue had been a greater man in a sphere of more freedom, and illustrious Bossuet would not have played the flatterer. These great men alone dared strip the courtier to the man, and the man to the naked soul. Bossuet is always great and at freedom. Bourdaloue is only constrained by his scholastic discipline. Both formed themselves more or less in the school of the Fathers; but Bossuet took the spirit of their manner; Bourdaloue, only the substance of their matter. The Fathers in their spirit and their matter are the true models. Bossuet is not our favourite model from the French school, nor even Bourdaloue, however much we may praise him. Bossuet dwells in the higher regions of doctrine; he seldom troubles himself with the mere natural combat against human objections; he overwhelms them

with a divine and irresistible force. This is to preach as St. Paul would have us, in "all learning," and "wisdom," and "in the showing of the spirit of power." His great manner requires only to be carried into more popular subjects. The passions of courts work their deep and subtle way beneath a calm smooth surface. Self, with its pride and sensualism, is disguised beneath the refined delicacy of an almost spiritualised language. Real earnestness is out of place. The fervid energy of an Isaias or a St. Paul would cause as much astonishment as the vulgar intrusion of a mob. The prophet tried its effects, and his body was sawn asunder; the apostle made a similar attempt, and was politely put off until another day, although Felix was terrified. Eternity in its realities has never been fashionable. The court preacher must take much of his tone from his audience. He preaches not to men and women, and to souls immortal; but he has the honour to be introduced to address a discourse to kings, princes, and great ones, who are magnificently dressed for the ceremonial, who believe they shall have an immortality on this earth, and nevertheless lend their countenance and support to religion. Hence, the sermons of Massillon are, most of them, beautiful essays on the objections which the courtier is supposed to entertain against a life of religion; a delicate analysis of all the arguments which polite ambition, polite idleness, and polite luxury, could possibly bring against the de-

voting of the heart to piety. I except, of course, his sermons on the Delay of Repentance, on the Passion of our Lord, and some others, which, demonstrate so clearly what the preacher would have become in any sphere more congenial to the development of his great powers.

It has often appeared to me that this favourite method of preaching by handling objections, by keeping up a constant reasoning with the fallacies of the passions, is founded more on courtesy than on reality. The passions act from impulse, not from reasoning. The real contest of the man is between the divine dictate of his conscience and the weakness of his will to resist indulgence. Conscience requires to be enlightened with more of truth, the resolution of the will to be fortified with stronger motives, the heart to be strengthened with greater grace, rather than the passions to be subtly reasoned with in order to convict them of an error in judgment. But whatever may be judged of this style, as addressed to the refined and delicate few, it is certainly not the eloquence demanded by the multitude. Thirsting for religious truth, and seeking on all sides for a shore of rest from the tossing of their doubts and difficulties; accustomed to strong emotions, and yearning for the mysterious and the supernatural; they are grateful for whatever may exalt them above their trials, restore hope to their future, or strengthen them to endure their present painful condition. Let the preacher but bring down

great truths from God, in a great and earnest manner, and they will seize the soul with so divine and irresistible an influence, that all objections sink overwhelmed beneath their force. To be ever dwelling amidst objections, is to remain with human nature. Man wants divine influence. To go on matching reason against reason is but to fight nature with nature, a feeble weapon at the best. But fill the soul with a divine light, move her with a spiritual emotion, and nothing becomes so evident as the inanity of objections, nothing so sensible as the folly of resisting God. The preacher stands on the mountain of beatitudes, at the feet of the Son of God, he descends not to the crowd of human passions which agitate the plain below, but overways them, calls them up to him, makes them sensible of their natural infirmity as he exalts them to diviner things, and so heals them.

Our subjection to conventional ideas has been mentioned as another cause which constrains the free spirit and oppresses the powers of our sacred eloquence.

That singularly artificial coldness of demeanour, that elaborately assumed tone of indifference to all feeling, by which the fashionable class of society in this country distinguish themselves, has seriously affected the good sense of a large portion of the general community; it has helped, in no small degree, to chill the heart and stifle the feelings by their habitual suppression. In their in-

tercourse with others beyond their private circle, men have feared to be warm and congenial until they have lost the disposition; and a good deal of this under the apprehension of some undefined vulgarity. This is no offspring of Catholicity. It may be allowed, perhaps, to question how far the real vulgarity is to be found on the other side. Does not the nobleness of a fine and sensible nature, especially when exalted and purified by christian love, speak out her kindnesses independent of observation, as she breathes her charities unchecked by the fear of men? Sensualism is cold, and pride is cold; these are the spirit and form of selfishness. But the generous and loving nature is warm and confiding, as well as free. The religious spirit, charity, has been described by St. Paul as not seeking what is useful to herself, but unto many. It has been beautifully defined by Gerbet as the mysterious joy of sacrifice. This is the true nobleness of the soul; this is what makes us like to the God residing in man. Have not the ideas generated by our artificial manners affected even our preachers? Have they not combined with other causes to repress the glow and fervour of their aspirations?

Then have we in vogue, borrowed from the Anglican establishment, the mechanical practice of reading instead of preaching. We hear nothing of this practice in the early ages of the church. The homilies of the Eastern and the tractates of the Western fathers were all spoken

effusions, derived from meditation; hence their spirit and power. This mode of delivery greatly influences the style and tone of composition. Hence we are not deficient in a certain art of making sermons. We have at hand mechanical collections of materials, which we mechanically put together, as we mechanically deliver them. We tessellate words and sentences instead of fusing ideas. Hence a want of great and overpowering conceptions. We abound in dissertations on virtue and vice, and in essays on the passions and their workings. These are made to hold the place of those great and inspiring truths which the apostolic men and Fathers drew forth from the revelations of God.

The defenders of these things have very naturally affirmed that the English mind is too calm and rational to draw profit from a greater and more glowing eloquence. This is rather an Anglican idea than an English truth. The state church is cold, not the English heart. The genius of our countrymen is by no means averse either to the most soaring flights of mind, or to the most energetic appeals of the soul. What nation has more appreciated the great orators of other times and countries? What nation has found more content in the glowing imagery of sacred Scripture? What nation has more copiously cultivated the intuitive literature of the East? Our dramatic writers, our poets, our very novelists, shew what ardent and what eloquent feeling our

countrymen can appreciate, and to what fervid passion they can give expression. Chatham, Burke, Sheridan, Erskine, carried along with them the most calm and fastidious of our minds, and bound them as if by enchantment. Our countrymen never weary of listening to the profound and ever-varying sensibility of O'Connell, even when it burns and blasts like lightning; to the picturesque imagery of Shiel; or to the full, vehement, and impetuous torrent of Brougham. Is not England the prolific soil of puritanism, of methodism, and of many other growths of enthusiasm? Even weeds will shew the productive character of the soil in which they spring. Her children are easily moved, and her multitudes urged forward by almost any spirit, provided it be in earnest. Wesley and Whitefield have only proved what might be effected by a Brydane, a Segneri, or a St. Francis Regis.

There is an appetite for profound emotion in the human soul. If our own countrymen have also a fund of good sense, the more likely is truth to prevail with them when expressed with deep emotion, than error that is uttered with wild enthusiasm. We want faith in the human soul and in what God himself works within her. This want of confidence is as injurious to our usefulness for others, as want of faith, in our own case, would be injurious to ourselves. Every soul feels, more or less, the spiritual power within her, and yearns for supernatural truth as she thirsts for a mysterious

and divine emotion. What we feel and want, others feel and want. What moves us, moves others also. In the guiltiest and hardiest criminals I ever met, during my experience of New South Wales and Norfolk Island, beneath that outward surface by which so many men form their hasty judgments, I have ever found the same pliant human nature, moved by the same reasons, swayed by the same motives, and accessible to the same feelings with their fellow-men. Let us have faith, then, in our common family likeness as the children of one Father, in inward spirit as in outward feature : whatever we see clearly, let us express earnestly ; whatever we feel strongly, let us speak it ardently, and in the full confidence of human sympathy. One or two mortals, out of a large assembly, who are either by nature of a cold eye, or who affect the *esprit fort*, may wear an air of indifference ; but, though they may be slow in discovering the fact, they too will feel, at the proper season, if we keep but true to our own genuine impulses. Nothing exercises a more paralyzing influence over the sacred orator, or indeed over any speaker, than that keeping an eye on the select half-dozen. If he consults what he imagines to be their finer taste, his discourse will fall vapid on the ears of all. Let him speak with confidence to the numbers, and he will not fail to satisfy the judgment of the select.

Considerable observation has led me to think that we do not always enough consider the capa-

bilities of uneducated or of younger minds for apprehending and deriving profit from the more elevated views and mysteries of our holy religion : young minds are often capable of great thoughts. The young in general think and observe considerably more than we give them credit for. When the early period of life is directed to piety, the tender soul is, not unfrequently, occupied with the purest views of a spiritual nature, covered with veilings of beautiful imagery, and awakening the most generous thoughts. Alas ! that they should wither in the atmosphere of this world, and decay for want of cherishment. To their purer and more generous sentiments, their elders do not respond. Suspicion arises of their being peculiar, perhaps delusive ; why do they not dwell with others ? They lose confidence in them, and so they wear away. Blessed are they who in time discover a kindred soul disposed to commune with their thoughts. Many of our purest sentiments and of our noblest thoughts are those we recal from youth. More of the uneducated retain traits of the simple and earnest character of their youth than of those classes which we esteemed to be the better favoured. It is amongst those simple and earnest-hearted ones that we shall find the greater aptitude to relish divine truth. The uneducated have so many thoughts and aspirations which they cannot express. What a deep want of the mystical in such hearts ! It is the want of faith in each other and in what God does for us, that gives

rise to so much outward show of infidelity, sensualism, materialism.

Naturalism, mere heathenism, has pervaded our systems of education as much as it has our fine arts. Hence the habitual exclusion of the mystical, of the spiritual view of the relations of things, from the souls of the educated. This state of things has become so general, so habitual, and traditional, that it is with difficulty we perceive it to be an error. Even where the discipline of Catholic piety sustains the soul through her educational course, she rarely indeed can pass the ordeal without considerable injury to her spiritual perceptions. Naturalism is scarcely the complete term, to express the lamentable fact, it is naturalism, *minus* our natural tendencies towards the spiritual side of things—it is naturalism materialised.

But perhaps the main cause of our failing from the energy and grace of apostolic men, is the practice of drawing our sermons from secondary sources ; from fragments of modern discourses, from anatomized limbs and detached portions of the great divines and ascetics, and from collected atoms of the Apostles and Fathers, which, deprived of the spirit that animated the body of which they formed a part, are stored up and classified like dried exotics or curious reliques of former days, and shrunken and withered like them from their original grandeur, in *Bibliothèques*, *Dictionnaires*, and *Loci Communes*. Would we feel *their* power,

we must converse with the inspired men themselves, read the divine works of those who drew at the fountains of inspiration, and meditate their thoughts until we feel their inspiration. The sacred Scriptures, the early Fathers, our own meditations, these are the prime fountains of sacred eloquence. We must fill ourselves with the body of Catholic tradition, thus only shall we comprehend the plenitude of the spirit which God has spread abroad within his everlasting church. The Fathers of the early church were men of prayer and men of the sacred Scriptures. Aided by the spirit of the apostolic man before them, in the solitary meditation of the divine books, they drew their profound knowledge. Their lives were the substantial impersonation of their doctrine. They lived in God, for God, and from God. They came out of the solitude of God only to dispense his gifts to men, and returned again into his presence. Hence they spoke in the spirit and power, and with all the tone of inspired men. So filled were they with the substance of the sacred Scriptures, that, as Bossuet remarks, "What even escapes them beyond their design has in it more of solid nutriment than that which others deliberately bring forth from their meditations." Their great works are wonderful. They are like creations. There were spiritual giants in those days, men of heavenly renown. Their faithful souls grew vast of grace, and full of love, and profound in the experience of the cross, in their fiery furnace of trial, amidst

persecutions, martyrdoms, and monstrous heresies. Every thing then was vast. Satan was strong in the world, and strong powers were given the saints to vanquish him. There has been nothing new from the adversary since; only feebler revivals of things grown old. St. Thomas, Bellarmin, Bossuet, have drawn every thing from the Fathers: they are only great by them.

When a man feels indisposed to undertake what seems to him a task, his favourite plea against it is want of time. The cumbrous tomes of the Fathers in their long and massive array! Is there not here an hallucination? We familiarize ourselves with the confessions of St. Augustine, the Treatise on the Priesthood of St. Chrysostom, and the Treatise on Consideration by St. Bernard, because they are brought to our hands in small portable volumes. Present these and similar works as they lie in the mass of large folios, and they strike us with terror. We cannot bring ourselves to consider the Fathers individually, and to take in hand their separate works singly, but a hundred and fifty folios fall with their smothering weight upon our imagination. Few of us, especially during the years of preparation, are without time to read those greater works of the greatest Fathers which make most to our purpose. And what can be a greater economy of time than this employment? Instruct ourselves we must, if we would instruct others. Catholic tradition we must possess. The exhaustions of our mind must be

repaired. "Give thyself to reading" was the advice of St. Paul to an apostolic pastor incessantly labouring amidst his flock. To take the most solid and Catholic reading is the true economy of time. A little of this reading will go much further, and content the mind far more, than a great deal which is of a less Catholic description. We read more pages of paraphrase on sentences of the Fathers, and of other recent literature, than would contain all the great works of the Holy Fathers, without any complaint of want or of loss of time. The greatest work of any Father does not reach beyond the fashionable extent of 3 vols. 12mo., and few extend beyond a small octavo. It is not necessary that for this purpose we should have the great and costly editions. Most of their principal works have been published in various cheaper forms. The quarto editions of France, or the yet cheaper octavos of Germany, or the collections of their select works, are accessible to the means of most of us. There is no one who cannot provide himself with a few of them, and gradually with all that he may require.

All the illustrious men of his own and of recent ages vie with each other in exalting St. John Chrysostom as the great model of Christian preachers. Whether we consider the substance and extent of his doctrine, the genius with which he illustrates it, the profound knowledge of the human heart which he discovers in applying it, the feeling with which he is animated, or the free

and fervid spirit of his delivery, all these qualities combine, as his earnest and luminous soul blends her unction with his voice, to proclaim him the perfection of Christian oratory; for his very writings speak, as if aloud, to the ear, the true test of written eloquence. That somewhat of diffuseness observed by the reading critic would constitute the last perfection to the attentive audience, giving to the ear all that fulness of harmony, to the heart that delay upon the idea, which the rapt listener desires. The reading of St. Chrysostom is like contemplating a series of great pictures from the Catholic pencil, and listening, at the same moment, to the exposition of their sense and spirit from the lips of a St. Paul; for this saint has drawn forth the entire spirit of the Gospel, and presented to us its beautiful precepts and sublime doctrines in bodies of harmonious and exquisite colouring, such as never satiate the gazing mind. St. Paul was his model. He had those diving epistles by memory. He wrote, it is said, with his portrait before his eye; certainly with the spirit of the apostle animating his breast. St. Paul is the inspired philosopher of the Gospel. He shews the reasons of things. He abounds in proofs and illustrations drawn from every region, whilst his vehement soul labours under the full and consuming glow of his inspirations. Strong as the angel of God, he wrestles with the soul, seizes hold of her in turns by all her faculties, overthrows her to the confession of her weakness,

and only permits her to depart after he has blessed her with a divine strength and a divine benediction. This contest against the fallen spirit of humanity with the arms of divine truth is the commission of the preacher. The Christian Demosthenes spent years in the solitude of a cavern, meditating the sacred Scripture, and chiefly St. Paul. He imbibed the whole spirit of his great master ; and, by his comprehension of the whole, he interprets and clears the obscurities of individual parts. Thus aided, and wholly filled with the spirit of the apostle, he was prepared to become the most clear, solid, and eloquent expounder of the Gospel. St. Chrysostom is eminently popular. He treats upon all the most exalted mysteries of our holy religion, and that often, yet never soars beyond the sight of common minds ; he discusses difficult questions of doctrine and of sacred history, yet never trespasses on the borders of obscurity. Where else shall we find so much profound knowledge, which, through his clear and simple manner of unfolding it, we never think of as being profound knowledge ? so much of true philosophy, without our being troubled, even for an instant, with any apparitions of the quaint and formal garb of science ? Every thing in his discourse is embodied, lives and moves before the very carnal sight of men, and yet this beautiful imagery, drawn from sacred Scripture, from men and from experience, from the very men before him, is only a transparent veil, that, with-

out concealing, covers and makes attractive, the exalted and divine spirituality of his thoughts. He never loses sight of the actual condition, wants, and circumstances of his hearers. Let an abuse arise, or a vice prevail, and he allows it no rest; he pursues it in every way, presses after it through every refuge, and combats it without relaxation, and with all the weapons of speech, until the evil disappears. Although on all the mysteries he has said great and sublime things, it is on the holy eucharist that he is incomparable. He has been also styled the trumpet of the last judgment, from the appalling grandeur with which he has put forth the terrors of that fearful day. He preached to vast multitudes, and preached so often, that he could have had but little time for immediate preparation, yet he produced the most surprising effects. His homilies on St. Paul and on St. Matthew, his discourses to the people of Antioch, and the treatises on compunction, should be the constant study of the preacher for the people.

St. Gregory Nazianzen, after the manner of St. John the Evangelist, soars with the eagle's wing into the very bosom of the Divinity, and comes down amongst men covered with the clear splendours of divine light. He is the doctor of the Divine Word, and of the Word made flesh. He has merited the name of the Theologue. He contemplates the Divinity, until he is filled, and sees all things else to be filled, with the intelligence of

the divine presence. There is a majestic, a god-like amplitude in his lofty declamations. Full of energy and ardour, he is yet more full of light. Of the cherubic more than of the seraphic order of spirits, he illuminates all things with a divine splendour. His bosom friend, St. Basil, is the sacred orator who is esteemed as being, on all sides and in every respect, perfect and without a fault. "He had profoundly meditated the whole detail of the Gospel," remarks Fenelon; "he was acquainted with the maladies of men in all their depths; he is a great master in the conducting of souls."

St. Augustine, like St. Paul, had sounded the depths of human weakness, and had passed through all the regions of error in his own painful and sad experience. Thus dreadfully instructed and experimentally advised of man's natural helplessness, he is prepared to comprehend, with the great apostle, the rich and inexhaustible treasury of divine gifts, and to discern, from the midst of human nature, the divine operations of grace. He is eminently the doctor of divine grace. Separating the precious things of God from the vile productions of man's mere will, he discovers to us all our wants, our natural blindness, our weakness of heart, the fever of our passions, and the natural debility of the soul; whilst, on the other hand, he displays the power, magnificence, and abundance of those gifts and healing graces in which the God of mercy and of goodness descends unto our re-

medy. His works against the Pelagians appear to me of inestimable value to the preacher. And what a knowledge does he discover of the human heart, not only in these, but in all his writings, especially in those admirable Confessions, "which always praise God." What clear discrimination of the divine from the human elements which strive to hold the mastery of the soul. What pictures of the interior combat waged by corrupt nature and the passions against the will and grace of infinite goodness. This Father is pre-eminently the doctor of divine charity. The love of God is the animating principle, the very spirit of that life which pervades his writings. He draws all things from, he directs all things to, the divine principle of love. What a fountain of divinest thoughts and emotions, flowing with what an unction, in his commentary on the Psalms! Then, those effusions of the heart over the Gospel of St. John!

In his "City of God," that "great and arduous undertaking," of which "God is the helper," he is the vindicator of eternal providence. From the mind of God, to which the saint has been elevated in his contemplations of divine truth, he looks down upon the whole course of human affairs, from their beginning to his time. He surveys the whole of the dread conflict between the corrupted spirit of man and the will of almighty goodness; all that pride and the passions contend and rage against the fixed eternal truth. He beholds the two cities: that of Jerusalem, of the

children of peace and love, the city of God; and the city of Babylon, of the children of confusion and of pride, the city of the spirit of evil: he considers all the trials of the peaceful children of God, commingled in their laborious exile with the children of blind confusion, drawing their secret help from heaven, conquering and winning crowns by their patience and endurance. From these scenes, that we may understand them the better, he raises up our minds to the contemplation of the future separation of those cities, and the blissful rewards of the children of peace. He beholds Almighty Wisdom directing the issues of human wills to his own eternal purpose, drawing good out of evil, turning the bad resolves of men to his own glorious ends, mixing the action of his providence with all things good and evil, and using the very wickedness of the reprobate as an instrument wherewith to purify, invigorate, and perfect his elect. He shews how our miseries are the offspring and punishment of sin, and how every sorrow, pain, and privation, are convertible into good, by the grace and patience of endurance. How trial works suffering, how suffering purifies, how purity loves, how love wins glory. How many of the principles and views of this great work are applicable to our own calamitous times. It was from the "City of God," which constitutes its author the doctor of divine providence, that Bossuet learned to contemplate the course of God's providence in the visible government of the world. St. Augus-

tine is also the doctor of the Holy Trinity ; his fifteen books illuminate and comprise all tradition on this first and sublimest of mysteries. St. Augustine is a university of knowledge, divine and human ; and yet, with all this, we know not whether most to be astonished at the extent and profundity of his knowledge, the ardour and simplicity of his love, which no labour of his mind seems to impair, or the singularly ready and versatile character, and the inexhaustible resources of his practical genius. He turns himself on all sides, and, with an equal facility, takes every shape in his encounters with the enemies of truth. In conferences, disputations, councils, of which he is the soul, treatises of every form and volume, letters, sent in every direction, familiar and popular sermons, even alphabets for children, as that acrostic against the Donatists, nothing is too great or too little for his zeal or for his genius. Every error and abuse of his time sank down beneath his wondrous and untiring energy. I only know of one other man in history of a similar power and stamp of mind ; the general similarity has often struck me, but his genius is exercised in a different atmosphere.

Lord Bacon has said, if any man's wits be wandering, let him apply himself to the mathematics. To the divine, under similar circumstances, I would say, let him apply his mind to Tertullian. The concentration and weight of his thoughts seem to impede his progress, yet does he advance

majestically, encumbered though he be with the grandeur of his conceptions, too great and rising too thickly for human words to utter them. He is greater than that emperor and that world which he addresses. He sees the cruel powers of the flesh arrayed against the spirit, and the world against God; a world of executioners, yielding ready obedience to their chief, and trying, with their tortures, all the innocent victims who love God, of whose number he is one, of whose cause he is the voice. He is sombre, pathetic, heroic of divine victory, yet smothered, oppressed, held down, as if loaded with mountains, beneath the injustice of a world of sin, of flesh, and of lurid passion. Tertullian, with his disciple St. Cyprian, and Vincent of Lerins, have expounded the doctrine of the constitution of the church, in her indivisible and unchanging unity, extending itself to universality of time, place, and doctrine. With St. Augustine, they may be considered, by eminence, the doctors of Catholicism.

St. Ephrem, the Syrian, is styled the prophet of death and judgment. What must be his power in his own language, since his profound pathos and his sweet and penetrating unction reach us, even through translations, and hold the dominion of our souls! What a majesty, sombre and tragic, yet so simply and distinctly coloured, in all his sublime paintings of heaven and earth, of graves, angels, dying men, and mysteries, so wonderfully yet clearly blended! What dramatic

power in his scenes and dialogues, and what a force to shake the soul with a tranquil horror, and still to fascinate and charm her unto her peace ! Every thing he has written should be devoured and reproduced.

St. Bernard is the doctor of divine unction, the sweetness of grace is spread over his lips. Like oil poured out, he is all mercy, compassion, tenderness, love. St. Bonaventure is the doctor of illuminated love ; he comes from among the seraphs to teach us that love in the spirit of light and peace. He, also, with St. Chrysostom, is the beautiful teacher of the human life of Christ. His "Opuscula" should never be laid aside.

The secret of the spirit of the Fathers is their profound and intimate conviction, arising out of their constant union with God. Their inward life was one of faith, of love, of prayer, and of solitude, even amidst their occupations. Hence, in the light of their spirit, did they behold things invisible to the flesh, with the facility and clearness with which we look upon things visible.

Our converse with the Holy Fathers will irresistibly attract us to the sacred Scriptures themselves, as the source of all their wealth. During his years of preparation, let the young divine, after the example of St. Chrysostom, commit gradually to his memory the discourses of our blessed Saviour, and the Epistles of St. Paul, revolving and pondering their sense within his heart. The writer has found this one of the most

valuable of the practices which he owes to his own right reverend preceptor, the Apostolic Bishop of New Holland. With the letter of the Psalms we are all conversant by a daily familiarity and a holy duty ; and what means are there not offered to our hands for comprehending their profound and various sense and their many-sided application to the changing conditions of the soul ? What an exploration of human nature in the sapiential books, with whose maxims the preacher should be familiar ! Then the wondrous prophets ! The sublime and fervid preachers of the old law, and the anticipators of the new. Let the preacher clothe himself in the majesty of Isaias, in the sublime grandeur of Ezechiel, let him imbibe the tender sorrow of Jeremias. St. Chrysostom has shewn the value of a knowledge of the entire of that ceremonial which God himself invented and prescribed for his solemn worship in the Old Law, as presenting to us a noble and a gorgeous array of imagery for the embodying and illustrating of divine truth, abounding as it does with mystical and spiritual significations. The great historic characters of the Old Testament should be studied until they live in our sight. How admirably have not the Fathers presented these sublime figures before us ! They are the living types of the communion of God with man, by grace and faith. How well acquainted should not the preacher be, then, with the history of the sacred humanity of our divine and blessed Master

himself. St. Bonaventure counsels us—it was his own admirable practice—to accustom our minds to consider ourselves as placed amidst the apostles in his sacred company, and, filled with a holy veneration in that presence, respectfully to contemplate each feature and characteristic of his countenance and bearing, until we habitually behold him, as it were, living and looking upon us, and animated with all those sentiments to which his divine heart gave utterance ; become, as it were, eye-witnesses of his actions and teachings, and feel ourselves practically animated with the wisdom, beauty, and grace of the incarnate God, as if he were the personal companion and guide of our thoughts and labours, until we behold and hear him in all his lowliness of carriage and poverty of spirit, in all his meekness, in all his compassion and all his patient suffering, in all his forgetfulness of himself and abandonment to the will of his heavenly Father ; until his own sacred words seem to flow into our hearts from his own sacred lips, and all his love and sorrow live before us. With such preparation as was that of the Fathers in their solitude, who could fail to be eloquent and inspired ?

“Prayer,”—observes St. Basil, in a beautiful letter to St. Gregory Nazianzen,—“prayer should succeed the sacred Scriptures. It kindles in the soul a more vigorous energy than reading, by the flame of divine love which it lights within. Prayer diffuses a clearness in the soul, by which she sees

more of the mysteries of the divine essence. Prayer causes God himself to reside within her, penetrating her understanding and memory with the profound sense of his presence. It makes the Christian the temple of the Divinity, a sanctuary into which neither earthly cares enter, nor the sudden revolutions which agitate the world, nor those miserable affections which cause all our disorders. Strange to all else, no society enters there but God."

May the writer venture to recommend some attention to our great contemplative writers, as a part of the preacher's own internal preparation for his great function? He feels secure of the approval of every one at all conversant with the subject. No person will conclude from this, that he is disposed to recommend the preaching of mystical divinity to the multitude. But the preacher himself should be illuminated in the highest degree to which his soul may feel attracted, and be filled with the power of that unction from the Holy One which peacefully and compendiously teaches all truth through the divine Spirit of love, the readiest and profoundest instructor in divine things. I am not surprised that, in the ardour of controversy, Bossuet should have given escape to words from which others have inferred that the Fathers were unacquainted with purely spiritual contemplation. Görres has beautifully demonstrated its foundations in the sacred Scriptures, and has shewn in the reunion of the Spirit of God with the human

soul through the mystery of the incarnation, the root of all mysticism. Cassian, and the works attributed to the Areopagite, demonstrate its practice in the ages of the Fathers. Their own intense love of solitude, from which it was found so difficult at first to withdraw them, and to which they so much loved to return, proves the same fact. In what, then, did they differ from more recent contemplatives? Chiefly, perhaps, in this, that they did not commit to writing systematic accounts of the secrets of their own contemplative experience. No one conversant with the writings of the Fathers can doubt that many of them were profound contemplatives. Though they taught not this prayer to the unapt multitude, it nevertheless illuminates their teachings. Who can doubt this after reading St. Chrysostom's thoughts on nocturnal prayer, and on raising the mind from creatures to God ; or St. Augustine, or St. Gregory Nazianzen, in all their works? It was in this light of contemplation that St. Benedict saw the whole world brought together under one solar ray. It was from the same spirit of contemplation that the great St. Gregory expounded the circumstance to his inquiring deacon. "Every creature narrows into littleness," replied the saintly pope, "beneath the eye that beholds the Creator." The poet of Catholicism shews his profound appreciation of the illuminative value of the contemplative spirit, when, after conducting the soul through all the regions of creation, human and divine, and shewing her each

single creature, whether in a state of suffering or enjoying, one by one, he leads her at length to the highest form of truth, and by the divine gift, gives her to behold, comprised in the one volume of contemplative love, whatever is unfolded in the universe.

Catholic mysticism is that spiritual knowledge which is derived from the inspiration of God in the prayer of contemplation. It is the exponent, so far as human means of expression can convey, of the states and views of the soul as she is withdrawn by the power of God's Spirit from sense, though still a dweller in the flesh, and united by pure faith and love to the Divinity. It is the purest light to which, in our present condition, we can come. Shall we ever have a truly Catholic philosophy of the soul until this element be assumed amidst our mental phenomena, as exhibiting the highest experimental knowledge we possess of her powers and faculties by her relations with things divine, and, in a reflex light, with things natural also and of mere human cognizance? The contemplative, with St. Paul, sees visible things as but the substantial shadows of things invisible. He sees how, from invisible things, all things visible were made, through the word of God. He beholds those spiritual truths by a spiritual sight, as other men, with their sensual eyes, see bodies. He knows experimentally, and, as it were, by spiritual sense and touch, that they are far more real, substantial, and full of life. He

sees more clearly their relations with earthly and with heavenly things. Hence the force and depth of his convictions, the universality of his wisdom, and the light and energy of his words. He holds the key of knowledge ; but he must speak an earthly, a symbolic language, which gives but, as it were, a reflected shadow of his thoughts that pass expression. Whatever human language is used for the expression of spiritual things, is in its nature symbolical, and in its root figurative ; but the language of mystical writers is of necessity the most figurative of all language, conveying the highest spiritual truths through the means of their earthly shadows and resemblances. And it is the spiritual sense within us that separates the invisible truth from its material image. Let us call comparison to our aid. By the subtle and mysterious powers of the element of fire, the chemist reduces whatever things are gross, material, and subject to our senses, to their invisible elements ; they disappear from the senses, and are comprehensible only to the mind. In this sublimated, and as it were spiritualized condition, however those earthly things have ceased to be the objects of sight, they become far more profoundly intelligible to the mind's contemplation, both in their elemental nature, and in the laws and relations that govern their composition. Having thus contemplated them in their invisible, purer, and more simple nature, by the knowledge he has thus acquired, he again returns them into such bodily

compositions and sensible forms as he had previously understood and designed ; and henceforth his knowledge of these gross and material things is of a fuller and clearer light. It is an apt image of that power which is given to the mind over every truth which comes before the soul in the ardour of contemplative love. Symbolism is the sensible expression of spiritual things ; it has for its basis the relations that essentially exist, or which God has established, between body and spirit. It comprises all corporeal imagery as expressive of divine and spiritual truth, be they figures, allegories, parables, facts, ceremonies, pictures, monuments, or words. Mysticism is pure spiritual truth, as possessed by the soul, in proportion to her freedom from the dominion of sense and her union with God. Mysticism—symbolism, these are the extreme terms of that mysterious union and commingling influence of flesh and spirit—of things natural and divine—of heavenly and earthly elements, which constitute our present compound condition, and embrace the whole of its relations with God, with heaven, and with this visible world. But he only who, in the spirit of contemplation, can from time to time ascend beyond the merely natural and the visible forms of things, and dwell amongst purely spiritual and divine truths, is capable of beholding, in the light of truest wisdom, the power and value of each lesser thing. By the gift of divine grace, this tranquil contemplation, born of love, will infuse its light and unction into

every creation of the human mind, and every human thought ; it will give a grace, a wisdom, an illumination to the preacher's words, even when he handles the things of this earth, that men will wonder whence comes his power.

Our Divine and Blessed Master, in his own person and in his own conduct, has shewn the importance of the contemplative spirit as an element of the apostolic life. By forty days of solitude and abstraction from the wants of the body, feeding, "not on bread, but on the word that proceeds from the mouth of God," he prepared himself for his divine mission. The apostles describe themselves as coming to him often in lonely places. His nights are described as being passed in solitary mountains, in the "prayer of God." He invites his apostles, on their return from the first mission on which he had sent them, to "come apart into the desert, and rest a little." During his last visit to Jerusalem, he is described as spending his days in the temple, teaching the multitudes, but his nights were passed in the solitude of Mount Olivet. Thence he beheld Jerusalem and every scene of his sufferings ; whilst beneath him lay the valley of tombs, that valley of death and of future judgment, Jeoshaphat, with its brook of Cedron, whose muddy torrent he must drink of, and that Gethsemani, the scene of his agony, where he was found by Judas, because, says the Evangelist, he was accustomed there to be found. It was in this nocturnal solitude that

the apostles sought him, when he expounded to them the terrors of the last judgment, and the coming of the world's destruction. It was whilst occupied in this prayer of God, which was witnessed by Peter, James, and John, that his transfiguration took place. It was in this prayer of God, witnessed by the same apostles, that his agony came on.

St. Paul was raised to the most exalted contemplation of heavenly things; it was given to no mortal tongue to utter the visions of truth which he had in the spirit beheld. It was whilst St. John was "in the spirit," on the Lord's day, in his solitude of Patmos, that the visions of heaven were opened to him. St. Paul has himself fully described this higher and more perfect wisdom of contemplation, which he regretted that the Corinthians, although he pronounces them to be sanctified in Christ, were not yet fitted to receive, owing to those divisions and jealousies that existed amongst them respecting the merits of their teachers. This wisdom, the apostle describes as being preached only to the perfect. He calls it mystical wisdom—"the wisdom of God in mystery;" he calls it a hidden wisdom, as being unknown to this world, whose most exalted knowledge he describes as negative, that—"eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of any man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for those who love him." And this wisdom he declares to be revealed to the spirit by the

Spirit of God, searching all things, yea the deep things of God, and comparing spiritual things with things spiritual, that surpass the comprehension of the sensual man.

It is remarkable how the great contemplative and ascetic writers were familiar in the hands of our forefathers in the days of their fierce trial. Their volumes, marked with the names of these self-devoted men, are covered with emphatic notes and underlinings from their pens. It is not less worthy of remark, how many of these works they contrived to translate, and to publish, even with all the difficulties of going to a foreign press. Nor were we without our own eminent writers on the prayer of contemplation, and its admirable fruits, which, however little sought after now, were held in high esteem by our ancestors. The admirable treatises of that profound contemplative, Father Augustine Baker, more than forty of which were condensed and arranged by Cressy in the *Sancta Sophia*; the “*Scale of Perfection*,” “written by that eminent contemplative, Father Walter Hilton, a Carthusian monk;” the “*Cloud of Unknowing*,” and several other works of a similar cast, were deemed worthy to be placed on the same shelf with Woodhead’s translation of St. Theresa, with works of the profound Thaulerus, with St. Peter of Alcantara on Mental Prayer, with that admirable contemplative book “*The Interiour Christian*,” and with St. Francis of Sales on the Love of God, all which, with many

others, were made accessible in our own language.

What a source of wealth is presented to the preacher in ecclesiastical story ! For it is agreed on all hands, that no teaching is so efficacious as that which is animated and enforced by the shewing of great examples. Precept is but a lifeless letter compared to the quickening spirit of example. Example awakens at once our kindred feelings, shews how difficulties are conquered, and, by its attractive grace and loveliness, charms us to follow after with an emulous zeal. What a power to stir the grace within us in the lives of the blessed martyrs and saints ! Have not these been too much neglected in the pulpit of late years ? Nothing is so eagerly listened to by the people as narratives. No narratives so strongly seize their attention as narratives of fact ; no narratives of fact are so vivid, beautiful, and striking, as those of a personal kind ; no personal history, after that of our Divine Saviour himself, is so full of attraction, as the history of our Saviour's grace shewn forth in the heroic combats and virtues of his elect. How beautifully have not the Fathers painted the illustrious personages of the Old and of the New Testament, until those patriarchs, prophets, kings, and apostles, live before our eyes, and seem to speak to us personally. How beautifully St. Ambrose converses of that young Agnes, of only thirteen years ; too delicate for prison chains to clasp her tender frame ; too small for the sword to find

space for its wounds ; fearless in the bloody hands of the torturers ; stretching forth her hands to God amidst the fires of those sacrilegious altars ; preparing to die, but ignorant how, for she scarcely as yet knows life ; unfitted to endure, yet ripe for victory : who can have no spouse on earth, because espoused to one in heaven : who, surrounded with every torment invented to excruciate the body, and with every horror prepared to alarm the pure soul, sees only the angel by her side, and the Bridegroom awaiting her in heaven, whose love has already adorned her with inestimable jewels : the executioner trembling : every face around her pale and weeping : she without tears ; winning the double crown of martyrdom and purity. How beautifully has not the same Father, as well as St. Augustine and others, expatiated on that young deacon, St. Lawrence, who weeps because he cannot be allowed to suffer the pains of martyrdom with his spiritual Father ; what a tender dialogue between that holy Father on his way to death and that young disciple compelled to remain behind. Then, in reply to the tyrant's demand for the church's treasures, he presents to him all her poor and distressed ones, whom he knows by name, and considers as her richest ornaments and jewels. And then, whilst slowly consuming on his iron grate amidst the flames, and his executioners are anointing his body with oil, so much more fervent is the glow of divine love within his breast than all those outward burnings,

that, with a calm and gentle irony, he sets at naught the rage and cruelty of his tormentors. Such and similar examples abound in every age of the church, down to the saints and blessed martyrs of our own period. And it is narratives such as these that win attention without end ; that draw “ children from their play and old men from the chimney corner ;” chain every soul within a vast audience to the soul of the preacher ; unlock the generous fountains of the heart, and sink into the mind with a never-to-be-forgotten remembrance.

There is also another species of narrative which, if his genius at all lead him in that direction, the preacher will not be disposed to neglect. I mean those allegories, parables, and dramatic dialogues, which, drawn from incidents familiar to the experience of the mass of his hearers, are interwoven by their analogous associations with the doctrine he is labouring to inculcate, or the duty he is striving to impress. These, if well selected and consistently managed, never fail of success. We must not lose sight of the fact, that there is no such thing as planting in the human mind, we can only graft. Upon some idea already existing, we insert another in one or more points bearing resemblance ; and the more vivid, or the more dear and familiar, be the idea already rooted, and the more striking its affinity with the new thought presented, the more sure is the latter of a grateful and permanent welcome. And here our

adorable Master has shewn his infinite knowledge of the human heart. Whatever is nearest for the time, whatever has last occurred, whatever is most interesting or familiar to the minds, or dear to the hearts of his hearers, with that he associates and conveys to their minds his divine doctrines and precepts. Whether it be the temple, with its stately buildings, its solemnities, or the confidence with which it inspires the people ; a household, with its domestic solitudes and homely joys ; a field, with its fertile and barren spots, its sower, or its waving crops ; a vine, with its branches, its fruits, or its wine press ; a fig tree, budding into greenness, or stricken with barrenness ; a well of water ; a flock of sheep ; a multitude ; or a child that has been set before him ; all the scenes, the labours, the cares, and joys of life, become the ready channel by which to convey to the soul his heavenly truths. What a beautiful and a perfect instance is that of the sixth chapter of St. John. The doctrine to be taught is both new and difficult ; there is nothing like it within the whole compass of human experience. From the bread which the multitude whom he is seeking to instruct have eaten, and for which they follow after him, he takes occasion to pass to a spiritual bread, to be partaken by the mind, himself, which is the truth come down from heaven ; familiarized with this thought of eating him as the word of truth with the mouth of the spirit, as they have already eaten bread with the mouth of the body ; he then combines the two

ideas of a corporeal and a spiritual eating, with equal reference to himself: "My flesh is meat indeed, my blood is drink indeed; unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you shall not have life in you."

The parable of the pilgrim instructed on the way he is seeking to the heavenly Jerusalem, written by the Carthusian, Father Hilton, the Catholic production, be it remembered, from which Bunyan drew the ideas on which he raised his "Pilgrim's Progress;" the dispute between death and Satan on their power over man, which the Son of God decides, written by St. Ephrem; the death-bed scenes and dialogues of the same Father; the conversation of Thaulerus with the devout and illuminated man of poor and lowly condition; that beautiful legend of the middle ages, which narrates how Adam, grieving in his latter days over the calamities he had brought upon the earth, was moved to send Seth, his son, who by special permission passed this once the guarding cherubim, and that flaming sword which turned around the tree of life, and, taking thence, by his father's direction, of its life-giving fruit, it is placed after his death within the mouth of our first father, and buried with him on Mount Calvary; whence sprung that tree, which, for many ages held in veneration, and then, forgotten and neglected even as God himself, bore at length its immortal fruit, the Eternal Son of God: these, and similar narratives, some of which were drawn from incidents within his own

experience, the writer has not unfrequently adapted to illustrate his subjects, and has found that they fail not to rivet attention, to awaken emotion, to leave a lasting impression, and thus to ensure the recollection of these truths which the preacher has associated with them.

There is yet another resource, a resource which is original and may be made of great value to the preacher; a production of the apostles and apostolic men, and filled with the divinest teachings of the Holy Spirit. I speak of the exhortations and prayers of our liturgies and rituals, including that divine book the Pontifical. It is here that the Holy Spirit has breathed abroad, within the soul, his most exquisite language; and, beneath an imagery drawn from sensible acts and earthly things, has spoken to the heart the most purifying and spiritualizing thoughts. What symbolism! and what spirituality! How admirably blended! What a school in which to learn that divine language in which all the innocent creatures of God may speak unto our soul. What spiritual signification drawn from material things! What clearness of light, and what a divine simplicity! He who would imbibe the sweetest unction of that teaching Spirit which preserves the church in truth, and inspires her with love, let him meditate upon the church's rituals.

But what are all outward aids and resources without inward labour and meditation? "The true Master," as St. Augustine so often repeats, "is

the teacher within the heart. For far within, and remote from the senses of the flesh, is the school of His divinest teachings." Let the voice of the church, expounding the sacred Scriptures by the eloquent tongues of those meditative Fathers, but resound anew within our own souls; let this teaching be harmoniously wrought by the grace of prayer, and assimilated to the substance of our own spirit; and we shall feel no inclination to go about gathering up fragments, broken from other men's minds but deprived of their spirit, for the composition of inanimate sermons. We shall rise above mere artificial and scholastic models. The present need of the audience will suggest the course of our eloquence: the capacity of the people in its greatest actual wants will become the mould into which our discourse will naturally flow; and the freedom and fulness of our own spirit, as it works with the grace of God, will do the rest. It was thus the Fathers spoke.

The schools in which the prophets were trained, and the great art and literary skill with which it is found, on analysis, that their vehement and glowing eloquence is composed, shew the industry with which they had prepared themselves to give human utterance to their divine inspirations.

Preaching, observes St. Chrysostom,* is the most laborious exercise of the sacred ministry; it demands a devotedness the most sustained, and

* Hom. 3, in 1 Cor.

a courage the most intrepid. And hence, whilst St. Paul consigns the other functions of his ministry into other hands, he reserves this duty, the most arduous of all, to himself. Nothing can be more striking than the earnest language in which he urges and presses his disciples in the same career on the laborious energy which this duty exacts. He exhorts them to give themselves to reading; to stir up the grace within them as we kindle a conflagration out of smouldering fire; to preach the word earnestly, even when that earnestness is judged unseasonable; to put forth that energy in arguments, in entreaties, in reproofs, in every kind of persevering endurance, and in all manner of learning; to meditate upon, to be wholly absorbed in, these things; to take every shape with those that hear us, counting aged men as fathers, young men as brothers, aged women as mothers, the younger ones as sisters; making oneself all to all to gain all, mixing authority, command, and even sharp rebuke, with all charity, patience, and tenderness of entreaty.

Perhaps the best description of the qualities of good preaching, given in few words, is that of St. Chrysostom: "Strong of truths, and clothed in the words that are proper to the subject."

Perhaps the best treatise on the qualities of good preaching, with regard to substance as well as form, is that of St. Augustine in his four books *De Doctrinâ Christianâ*.

A discourse, remarks this Father, which leaves

the hearer tranquil, which fills him not with emotion, which troubles him not, which subdues not, which overwhelms not the spirit of resistance, however beautiful it may seem, is not truly eloquent. To fill the sinner with horror of his sins, and with fear of the judgments of God ; to scatter those delusive charms that blind him to his condition ; to force open his eyes ; to make him love what he now hates, and hate what he now loves ; to tear away from his heart those passions, quick, burning, and consuming, which hold over him a sway he has lost the power to master ; to tear him, in short, from himself, his desires, his enjoyments, from whatever constitutes his very life ; to achieve this victory, it is not enough for the preacher to enlighten the mind by instruction, and to attract the heart by pleasure, it is absolutely necessary that he strongly move the soul.

Almighty grace alone can move the heart, continues this Father, in a passage which Grenada, Fenelon, Rollin, and every writer on the subject, has made use of. To think otherwise is to annihilate the cross. The preacher must count less on his efforts than on his prayers. Before, then, he ventures to speak to his fellow-men, let him address himself to God, who alone knows the secrets of hearts, and whatever will best succeed. Having done this, let him exert every means in his power, persuaded at the same time that he discourses in vain to the outward ear, if God speak not himself within the soul. But it is the lofty

and pathetic, filled with great and vivid images, and with strong and earnest emotions, that carries the consent and brings after it the heart. Reasons may convince, the graces of language may open and prepare, but to enter as a master and take possession of the heart is the task of great and strong eloquence.

Of this great and vehement style, free as being of the spirit, and fearless as being of the authority of God ; sustained by a zeal which never tires, drawing useful aids from every topic, and pressing them in all the shapes of energy, and under every earnest form of appeal, raising the minds of the hearers to the highest and most enlarging truths, only to plunge them the more profoundly within the sense of their native misery and abjection, that he may carry within the heart a deeper conviction of her supernatural wants, giving to the soul no rest or refuge, until he brings her triumphantly to embrace that cross on which he himself is fixed ; St. Paul is undoubtedly the greatest example for our imitation.

St. Augustine complains of those who preach human things instead of things divine. Surely this is to “ detain the truth of God in injustice,” and to fall short of that which is due. Let the preacher, after the example of this great Father, bring the presence of God from every distant heaven and place it within the soul. Let him cause it to be felt how the very soul he speaks to is the place of God, and God the place of the soul :

that however He be elsewhere, and to others, revealed, there only within that soul is the point of His communications with *her*—that in His divine essence, we breathe, and move, and live. Let him interpret the cry of conscience as the voice of God, whether it terrify us, as it did Adam after his fall; or console and strengthen us, as it did Elias in the desert. Let him everywhere bring the invisible world to light, and lay open the unceasing action of the guiding providence of God. Let him discover to man his real condition in his present state as but undergoing the process of formation for a new existence within the womb of time; drawing the vital air and nutriment which are essential to her spiritual growth, through the communications of a greater body of which he forms a part, from those boundless regions of eternity into which he is preparing to pass, for his birth into which, those celestial foods, sent thence, prepare and nourish him. Let him shew the continued communions of this favoured creature with that august Trinity from whose love and goodness comes every gift—with the Eternal Father, in the hourly support and continuance of existence—with the Eternal Son, in sacramental and substantial unions of grace—with the Eternal Spirit, in the lights and fervours of prayer—with all the sacred Persons of the Godhead in every gift. Let him raise the soul higher, that she may look the lower into her natural nothingness; shewing her how she has nothing of her own but

the mere liberty of her will, which, when unsustained by God, is prone to evil and works all sin; and how, in order to do good, she must be prevented, accompanied, and followed by the grace and operation of God. Let him reveal to her all that she is and may be through God, all that she is not, or ever can be, through herself. Thus, "separating the precious from the vile, even as the mouth of God," whatever is of God in man, from whatever is merely of himself, whilst he keeps before his mind his own natural weakness, he will the more fully exalt his supernatural grandeur. The more he thus raises and illuminates the soul, filling her with the spirit of truth and of love, the more will she be enabled, as she looks back upon her own infirm and poor nature, to feel the power and the gift of the present hand of God. Let him shew, in the infidelity and fall of our first parent, the history of all infidelity and of every fall. How, intruding his reason into the mysterious word of God, by his questionings of that word, he is the type of all the unbelief revived in his children. How, in his aspirings to become as God, and to possess the essential knowledge of things, he is the type of all pride. How, in his subjugation to the indulgence of his appetites, he is the type of all those sensualities which corrupt and destroy the relish of spiritual good. How, in his disobedience, he is the type of all rebellion against God. Exposing the nature of sin itself, let him lay bare its very roots in that aspiring,

selfish, and self-idolizing pride of the will and of the flesh, which, were but human power equal to realize human will, would strike at rivalry with God himself, and destroy the universal order of things. From this principle, let him demonstrate the enormity of that treason against the Supreme which is implied in the very nature of deliberate sin ; let him give its necessary tendencies a tongue to speak, and its consequences upon the sinner will no longer furnish matter for his ignorant astonishment. Let him teach humility as the essential quality of order, truth, and justice within the soul ; and charity as the substance of order, good, and joy. But when he speaks of charity herself, let the preacher ascend to her very birth-place in the bosom of God, where she sits enthroned in all her glories, and holds her eternal court—from which the soul came forth, for whose possession she is made, and unto which, by the enlivening and uniting power of love—that love infused by the God of love, we are destined to return. Let him shew how the heart which loves God is greater than all the material universe which cannot love, and that she only waits for that greatness to be made manifest in the eternal day of her revelation. How there is no true love of any thing but self without the love of God ; and how he that loves but himself, holds nothing but a delusion—is an embrace embracing nothing. How we are nothing in reality but the things we love, and whilst we miserably love but the crea-

ture in the place of God, how we contract and diminish ourselves to the poor unsatisfying qualities of these creatures of our love ; whilst all beyond within our souls is void and empty—unless the mercy of God should return, and by the spreading abroad of his love, bring our tormenting and conflicting chaos back to life and order. To the afflictions of this life, let the preacher hold up the cross, let him never weary of exalting it. It will solve the doubts that spring from trial, and, like the serpent raised by Moses in the desert, it will heal the sorrows and the anguish of our state of trial : it will give them a divine meaning, a divine motive, a divine grace, and a divine example. With St. Paul, let him plunge the soul into the wondrous depths of the atonement. Every soul of man is in labour for this mystery, and his spirit sighs until she has found it, and made it the place of her repose. When our hearers have been thus accustomed to contemplate the attributes of God, the mysteries of the Holy Trinity and of the Redemption, they will begin to comprehend the true nature of sin ; considering the depths of the atonement, they will embrace the cross ; embracing the cross, they will feel the horrors of sin, and will gather fresh powers to resist its assaults ; and the holy spirit of charity will grow and enlarge within their hearts, and add substance to the soul. The consideration of the four last things will then return with an overwhelming power. The cross will plant its roots within the centre of the soul,

and the horizon of her thoughts, as she continues to meditate and love, will recede all around and expand to truth under the visible light of God's presence. She will be devout, but her devotion will be illuminated, and by her converse as well as her example, she will spread this light to others. How much the people—people of every creed and opinion, are attracted and drawn round the Catholic preacher, who makes not merely the grounds of difference, but all the great fundamental doctrines and the great historical views of religion, the foundation of his counsels and exhortations, and who irradiates the regions of the soul with the clear, warm, and vivifying substance of divine light.

The writer, even in his poor efforts, has had opportunities of observing the fruits that may be gathered from this doctrinal method of preaching. Whilst delivering a series of expositions on the creation, from the first chapters of the Book of Genesis, and on the atonement, from portions of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, he had opportunities of remarking the profound feelings of religion and the valuable influence upon their conduct which these more enlarged views of the mysteries of religion left, even amongst those who are entirely uneducated and illiterate. We all know that it was this doctrinal method which the Fathers most generally pursued in their public preachings; from them it has been justly remarked, that we are less removed by time than

by our manners and discipline. St. Gregory of Nyssa informs us, that when St. Basil preached his beautiful homilies on the six days of the creation, so far were his sublime doctrines from surpassing the comprehension or rising above the interest of his hearers, that men, women, and children, even of the lowest condition, ran in crowds to hear him, shewing, by the eagerness with which they applauded, that no part of those eloquent dissertations was lost to them ; and that, however elevated they may appear to be, they neither exhausted the learning of the preacher nor the understanding of his hearers ; that the most simple-minded comprehended his discourses, whilst the most learned admired them.

St. Gregory Nazianzen, in his first oration on the priesthood, complains that many persons in his time had not sufficiently elevated views of the preaching of Christian truth, which he considers as the first of sacerdotal functions. “ The end to be attained in this function,” he tells us, “ is, to illuminate the mind, to touch the hearts of those confided to our care, and to penetrate their souls with all those great truths which are comprised within the high and divine philosophy of Christianity. We must unfold to them sometimes, what she discovers to us of the creation of the two worlds ; the visible and the invisible, the corporeal and the spiritual, and whatever she teaches us of the excellence of our souls. Sometimes, what she declares to us of that sage providence,

which, attentive at every point, supports all things in the condition for which He has created them; ruling and governing all by infinite wisdom, and through ways which lie above the reach of our intelligence. Sometimes we must unfold what she teaches us of that first state of innocence in which we were formed, of the fall we made in Adam, and of the reparation of our nature, which was wrought in the person and through the merits of Jesus Christ: and, sometimes, what she discovers to us of the character of the two Testaments, of the figures traced in the one, and of the truths comprised in the other. Sometimes should we expound to them what is declared to us of the first and of the second coming of Jesus Christ, of his incarnation, of his life, of his doctrine, of his sufferings, of his death, of his resurrection, and of the victory which he has gained over his enemies: and, sometimes, must we represent to them whatever truths she teaches us touching the future resurrection, the end and destruction of this universe, the judgment, and the rewards and chastisements of the life to come. Above all, is it needful to explain to the people what faith teaches us of the most august and blessed Trinity, a mystery about which those who are charged with the instruction of the people have various perils to shun."

"But," continues this eloquent Father, "the Spirit of God must animate our tongue and our voice, and fill us with the unction of his grace and

divinity. For it is through him alone that we are able to reveal the marvels that are hidden in God, and to expound them with dignity. If I have spoken of some of these august mysteries, it is to shew how difficult it is to treat of so many great and elevated matters; and, above all, in the presence of a multitude of people of every age, estate, and condition, to whose taste and dispositions it is needful that we so vary our discourses, that we may enlighten the spirit, touch the heart, and move the springs which put the soul in motion, with an ability and skill which may be in some sort compared to the art and dexterity with which an eminent musician will touch the various chords of his lyre, and from a thousand different sounds draw perfect harmony.”*

Has the preacher some particular success to achieve of which he almost despairs—some prevailing vice to root out, some neglected duty to revive, or some valuable practice that he would wish to make prevail? How invaluable will he find the method adopted by St. Chrysostom, of urging the same subject continually, and with an untiring patience; holding it up in every shape, and from every point of view; “in season and out of season”—in direct appeals, and amidst every other

* The direct citations from the Fathers contained in this book, are mostly through the French translations in the collections of Gillon. The library of the writer is, alas! in New South Wales; he has but lately become stationary, and he writes in the intervals of missionary duty without access to more than one or two of the original works.

topic that he has occasion to handle ; persevering on through every discouragement, until at length he gains the victory. The writer has experienced the value of this method. Let us hear the golden-mouthed Father speak himself of his practice. His words have been repeatedly cited ; they are from the homily on David and Saul :—" When a tumour which has long been forming in the body becomes hard and full of inflammation, it requires time and assiduous care, and all the resources of the healing art, to remove it without injury to the principles of life. So, when an inveterate passion is to be rooted from the heart, a day or two's instruction will not restore it to soundness ; but we must return often, and for some time, to the subject, if we would consult the sanctification of those who listen to us, in preference to either their pleasure or our own personal fame. For, in my opinion, the best method of instruction is not to let go the subject until ensured of its success. The preacher who to-day treats on alms-deeds, to-morrow on prayers, another day on temperance, then on humility, thus, incessantly passing from subject to subject, will leave no very vivid impression on the souls of his hearers. Would you leave deep and lasting traces, and gather the fruits of your ministry, urge, insist, return to the subject, and abandon not the battle-field until you find yourself the victor."

The preacher is clothed with power and wears the stole of authority. He is not a man debating

questions with his fellow-men, but a herald who proclaims the counsels of God. He stands not on the level of his hearers, for the divine election has raised him up from amongst them. Separated unto the Gospel, and placed within the sanctuary, filled with the divine word and its ineffable wisdom, endowed by consecration with the teaching spirit, replenished in soul with the blood of Christ, and flowing with the unction of the Holy One, he is the organ of God resounding all his will to man. He "commands and teaches." St. Paul calls him "the man of God;" the same apostle describes him as "the dispenser of the mysteries of God," as the workman of the ministry, as the planter and builder of the church, and as the prophet of future things. Having received the deposit of grace and truth, and having diligently attained to all things from the beginning, he is sent to reveal "the spirit received of God;" to declare "the sense of Christ;" and to make manifest "the spirit of power, of love, and of soberness."

He goes forth preaching *sapientiam in mysterio*—wisdom that is wrapped in mysteries; he is charged to bring each soul of man under obedience to its captivity. This truth in mystery is the crucified Christ, a folly and a riddle to the world, but to him, the preacher, the power and wisdom of God, which, the more it is exalted, the more will it draw all things within its wondrous power. With the great model of preachers, St. Paul, he

glories in the humiliations of the cross ; he knows nothing but the cross, and him, that Holy Redeemer, who is thereon crucified ; he makes all things heavenly, earthly, and infernal, to draw near and bow down before this rude and bloody cross ; in the centre of all human thoughts and affairs, he plants the cross that bears on its rugged beams the Son of God, as the solution of all human difficulties, and the cure of all human ills. From the roots of this tree of the knowledge of evil changed to good, which grows in the midst of the paradise of the new Adam—the Father of all the living, he follows the course of the rivers of life which water all the garden ; whether they flow backwards to all times past, of which the anticipating patriarchs drank by faith, or forwards, to all times coming, on the side of time, or on the side of eternity ; he shews what healing and invigorating streams flow down to man from that Calvary of blood and death, where is heard the strong cry of the Man God. Of vile esteem does he hold all other things compared to the possession of the cross. How can he prefer any thing, short of the heavens to which it leads and opens, to the cross ? For wherever the mystery of the cross has not come, darker and thicker mysteries find their dwelling-place, whose gloom the light from the cross can alone dispel. Therefore, amidst all the miseries and ignorances of human trial, he exalts the cross, as that beacon from eternity on which is hung the light which illumines

the world, and sheds the rays of hope to its lost and wandering people.

When will the preachers of the cross come forth? Those crucified men, the intrepid heroes of the divine word. When will they come forth as of old? Those men of prayer—those men of penance, deeply wounded with the dishonour of the divine name amongst men—those ardent lovers of God—those patient sufferers impassioned of the cross. When shall we see them in the midst of us? Moved with sorrow and compassion for a people who, like sheep, lie about without pastors; who, always seeking and never finding, fill the air with their anxious questionings—they would go forth to the lowly and the poor, and to every spirit that suffers need, lowly themselves in mind, fervent in spirit; simple and free in demeanour, and homely in words, but great in truth, great in eloquence, and great in charity. How many of our poor countrymen are afflicted and tried, who, ignorant of the treasures that are hidden within the cross, have not one single consolation in all their anguish? How many souls are without a definite hope? And how many of the unwilling children of error are sighing for some great deliverance, though they neither know its nature nor whence it is to arise to them? Such, in a manner, was the condition of Judea, when our Divine Saviour appeared upon her soil, a poor and a wandering preacher. Such was the condition of the world, when the apostles entered upon its mission.

They waited not for men to come together and build up roofs for their especial accommodation. They went about; the very sight of men moved them, and they spoke. It was the heroism of faith and compassion directed by the wisdom of God: and, as it ever must, the pride which supports the poor confidence of human opinions, was bowed down before that generous spirit of self-abandonment, which, whilst it proclaims the preacher's intimate convictions of the divine truth, proves the power of its grace within his soul, and its greatness beyond his nature, by the cheerfulness with which he sacrifices himself to its claims upon his love and obedience. The idle curiosity of the attracted listeners is succeeded by respectful attention and awakened interest, and conviction gratefully follows. There was always an outer circle of derision, scorn, and obloquy. There always must be one. This is the confessor's martyrdom—it is salutary for him. Whilst we praise the intrepid zeal which animates our distant missionaries; whilst we applaud their heroic encounters against the opinions, the prejudices, and the manners of those for whose salvation they are striving; whilst we admire that fervent, free, and pliant spirit with which they take all the shapes which charity and truth demand to meet peculiar circumstances; do we in any way forget that here, in our own country, we have a missionary field as great, demanding exertions as extraordinary and unusual, and that we have perhaps the advantage

of fewer insurmountable obstacles over many of our brethren who are labouring so extraordinarily in those distant fields. In this, our beloved country, each man is born to the title of free speech, and nothing is so jealously cherished amongst us as this right. He is privileged to rise up in every place to endeavour to inspire his thoughts into other men, and, therefore, as St. Paul found the men of Athens, so do we find our countrymen to be always seeking after some new thing. Is there any thing more new to this generation than the voice of our ancient monuments? Is any thing more new to them than the ancient spirit of our institutions and foundations? Is any thing more new to the great mass of our countrymen, or any thing about which they begin to feel more curiosity, than that ancient religion herself? Which, *we* know, is seldom listened to for any serious time without being embraced by the listener. And what could be more new, or more awakening, than to see her fervid yet discreet apostles going through the length and breadth of the land, and, whilst they leave all men free and without annoyance, as they claim the right to be left to themselves so long as they merely exercise their privilege of free and innocent speech, proclaim to the awakened souls of men, the wants they feel but understand not, and their healing remedies? Shall truth alone be delicate and afraid? But in what direction shall we look for the coming of these heroic men? To the illustrious order of preachers?

Or to the enlightened disciples of the younger society of charity? Does there still exist in that venerable Benedictine Family, which is so intimately connected with England's mission, some of that spirit which, under a St. Augustine, evangelized this land; and which, when driven out by "the great change," could never rest until her children, side by side with so many other generous men, returned to exchange their words of peace for crowns of martyrdom? Let us hope so. Wherever they may be, let us hope that our Lord has cast of the sparks of his own fire into some breasts, whence it is destined to spread the conflagration of charity. For where has religion ever been extensively spread or revived without these self-devoted apostles?

Let us pray, then, that these men of divinely kindled hearts may come forth to meet the spirit of this time and the wants of this nation. Leaving the retirement in which they nourish their souls, they will appear amidst the people; their function done, they will retire to replenish their hearts with greater light and a yet diviner charity. Coming forth again, like prophets, from their solitude, the light of truth once spread, their task once done, and leaving to others the care of gathering the fruits of their labours, not stopping to hear even one sound of their own praises from human lips, they will eagerly return into the presence of that God in whom is their desire and content, and to whom alone they look

for their reward. Give us but three such men, and the conversion of England is begun.

Had the greater part of the Sermons which follow been given to the public under the name of St. John Chrysostom, their title would have been almost as near the truth as that which ascribes them to their present author. Although he has given to them their present form, he can claim but little of their substance, unless where he has described the weaknesses of human nature, as, in their solitary or social workings, they have painfully manifested themselves to his observation and experience. The doctrinal views are of the Fathers. The homilies of the golden-mouthed St. John have been his principal marble quarry, whilst the fragments of Bossuet have been his *torso*. From the one he has taken much of his material ; in his earlier studies of the other, he strove, against his natural deficiencies, to acquire some little of that breadth and fulness of thought, that loftiness of view, that freedom of manner and energy of life, which so peculiarly characterize this most eloquent man. He fears with but little success.

Should these discourses prove to be not unacceptable, they may probably be followed at some later period by others.

The writer cannot recal these Sermons from the chambers of his memory, as he pens them, without awakening many interesting associations and some profound emotions. The substance of

them has, with others, been preached at the two extremities of the globe. Many of his friends will recognize their principal features. Then under what varied circumstances were they delivered, and how changed have already become the scenes of those ministrations. Some of them have been preached in Sydney, in that "old court-house," when we had not a consecrated roof under which to assemble, and where there are now a large cathedral, a magnificent parish church in course of erection, two chapels of ease, and ten thousand Catholics; and in that miserable "old gaol," which is by this time levelled to the ground. In a long upper room in that other "old gaol," in Paramatta, which was used as a guard-room, the soldiers turning out on the lawn whilst the priest officiated. Our only light, except from the wavering and flickering candles on the altar, came from the opening of a wooden shutter into the free air, which gave the priest a prospect of a busy tavern over the way. Our only music was the incessant noise of chains, and the oaths and mutterings of the iron gangs lodged beneath us. When the priest turned to the people, he saw nothing but darkness, and was unable to distinguish beyond the nearest line of countenances, and the Rembrandt-like light that shot across the gloom from a distant door. There is now a handsome church in the place, flanked by a school and a convent of the Sisters of Charity. In an old barn at Windsor, where now there is a goodly church, whose doors receive

a congregation of eight hundred persons, and where, besides free schools and a boarding-school, there is also an orphan house, which is supported by voluntary contributions. In an assembly room at Bathurst, beyond the blue mountains, which was placed over a suite of hotel stables ; where there is now a church sufficiently ample for one thousand persons, in which two priests minister. In the police court of Maitland, where, in those towns, east and west, situated within a mile of each other, there are now two churches, with a clergyman to each. In a public-house on Patrick's Plains, by the banks of the Upper Hunter's River ; in a room of the noble hospital of Liverpool ; in the police court of Campbell Town ; the public inn at Appin ; and the court house at Wollongong ; all which towns have now their clergy and their churches. The same accents have been heard, in a merchant's store, lumbered up with earthenware and glass goods at Adelaide, the capital of South Australia, where the commissioner officially refused to the preacher the use of a school-room, though then vacant on the Sunday, which had always been open to the accommodation of every other communion, until they were provided with a better building. In a sort of a wooden shed chapel at Hobart Town, the capital of Van Diemen's Land, whose materials shewed the brand of the King's broad arrow, in proof that it had been built by government early in the commencement of the colony. In a ward of the prisoner's

barrack at Norfolk Island, where now there is a chapel one hundred and fifty feet in length, whose walls are entirely covered with paintings imitated from the great masters ; and where two priests and a catechist administer to the spiritual wants of the prisoners. This circle of association would be incomplete were I not to add, that St. Chrysostom has been also listened to, through the emotions of my breast and the agitations of my voice, for once, at least, in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand. There the scene of preaching was equally characteristic, being a large store, employed by the government in the five-fold capacity of a warehouse, custom-house, audit-office, commissariat, and treasury.

The preacher may console himself with the idea that he is yet labouring in a scene of poverty, that continues, as heretofore, to remind him of that first scene of our dear Saviour's preaching, the desolate stable of Bethlehem. Except that it is set apart to religion, it yields but to some of those he has described in its wretchedness. The chapel at Coventry, situated on the outside of the town, is raised on a sloping bed of sand. The walls are broken and giving way, the ceiling in a very bad condition. The foundations on one side were recently taken out to be repaired, and were found to rest on rotten piles. The interior walls, especially of the sanctuary, are covered with wet, and the whole of the interior is a scene of cold and naked desolation, contrasting strangely enough

with the fervour of its poor but zealous congregation, whose rapidly increasing numbers it will scarcely contain. It threatens, ere long, to fall, and how to raise another we know not. It will be long before our zealous contributions of pence, hardly earned, and often retrenched from the very first necessities of life, can achieve the work ; and this little book is, in part of its motives, put forth, with a view to aid our slowly accumulating funds.

THE PENITENT.

THE substance of the following discourse was preached in Dublin, in the church of St. Francis Xavier, in the form of an appeal in aid of a penitentiary asylum belonging to that city of charities. It afterwards struck the preacher that the subject was capable of a wider application, and he has accordingly given it in its present form. The episode, which furnishes the transition from the life of the sinner of the city to that of the penitent, was suggested to his mind by a striking passage which is to be found both in the homily of St. Ephrem of Syria and in that of St. Gregory Nazianzen on Mary Magdalen. Both these Fathers have introduced the apostrophe to the dealer in unguents. Did one derive from the other, or had they both a common source in some antique tradition? Gillon, in his valuable collection of patristic eloquence, has not noticed this movement, though he analyzes the homily of St. Ephrem.

THE PENITENT.

ALARM not, my dear friends, your patience. Whilst the devout of heart are prepared to draw edification from whatever may be the subject of my discourse; let not the restless-minded or the indifferent fear that the next hour will be one of weariness. I am not going to preach or to lecture. I aspire not at present to those more grave and solid modes of instruction. I am simply going to tell you a story; but it shall be a story of the most faithful love, arising out of the sincerest repentance, following the experience of the saddest calamity that, I think, the world has ever seen.

Parents. Would you know with what a solicitude you should guard your entrusted charge? Mothers. Would you feel in time the dangers which, away from beneath your notice, will gather round your child? Fathers. It is your sublime duty to be the visible providence of God over those innocents in whom resides your second life. Would you understand the circumspection which this care demands? Daughters, virgin daughters! That purity of soul so delicate, would you feel its beauty by the contrast? That holy integrity of heart will not allow itself to be trifled with—one thoughtless moment may stain for ever its inviolate sanctity—one careless step may expose its sacred integrity to blight—one breath may tarnish, one thought may destroy its exquisite bloom. You are no longer then what

once you were. A painful remembrance, a dream of the happy past, may return at times to remind you of your once virgin dignity of soul. Heedless young men. Would you trace the consequences of what you are pleased to call an hour of trifling, and survey the history of what you are pleased to call a moment of passing folly? And should there be any poor strayed lamb of the flock, who, bleeding and mangled from the by-ways, and thirsting from the fever of her heart, has secretly crept into this assembly, in the hope of some healing for her wounds;—come, gather round me, and listen with attention, whilst I tell you the story of the penitent.

There was in the city—whether it be Jerusalem or this very place, it matters not; the case is the same; it has occurred more than once, and the same Redeemer still waits for the same penitent—there was in the city a daughter of the people of God. In the light of the faith had she grown up, and the fear with the love of God were given her from her tender years. Her mother encircled her with her affections, her father covered her head with his paternal blessings. By her mother's knee she prayed devoutly; and she looked upon the venerable brow of her father, as she heard from his lips the accents of the law. Like a lily did she blossom in the garden of God. But her father died; and, by that mysterious sympathy which binds the spouse to the faithful and long united spouse, her mother pined after him, sickened, sank down, and was gathered into his grave; and that daughter was an orphan, left unguarded and exposed among that people. For her elder sister, Martha, was busy about much service, and her only brother, Lazarus, lay sick upon his couch; and poor little Magdalen! being light of heart and full of flowing spirits, was confident of herself, for she knew not the wicked world. Like Eve, yet innocent in the enjoyment of her paradise, she played with the dangers which as yet she did not comprehend. She feared not

evil, for she had never tasted the fruits of sin. And, as she went carelessly about, meaning no evil thing, came there the seducer, under a mask of pleasant delusions; his dark heart concealed under winning manners, his foul designs hidden by flattering words, and the gilded promises of happy years to come. And poor Magdalen! who was as the lily blooming in the splendour of God's light, is blasted to a canker. Now is the dark fiend discovered in his darkness, he laughs the exulting demon's laugh, and goes his way, leaving the blighted lily drooped and broken. Poor, defiled Magdalen! Whither shall she go? To her mother's house? But there already sits desolation. How dares she face Martha the good? who, ever industrious and occupied, by her habits as much as by her words, had never ceased to reproach her triflings. Shall she go to her brother Lazarus, and add a sickness to his soul? To the priest of God? But fear and shame contend within and overmaster her resolution. Poor, desolate Magdalen! Whither shall she wander? Who will give her a corner for concealment: any obscure place on which to lay her streaming head: and a little dark bread on which to weep away her life? But there is no mercy from this world for fallen woman. The world will amuse itself with destroying her, and then amuse itself with the scandal of her destruction, but it will not pity her. May God in his mercy help her, for even woman herself grows stern and relentless in her feelings towards the dishonour of her sex. The good shun her. The evil proudly triumph. Oh! who will give her back her light of conscience before God—her light of honour before her people?

From the breast of the tempter the serpent has silently glided into the breast of guilty Mary. She was his prey, she is now his helpless victim, and about to become his instrument. Possessed in her turn, and subdued by the spirit of evil, she yields, after weary struggles, which shew her the

altered condition of her soul, and becomes herself the tempter. Man has wronged her, and the sense of her wrong is the venom that works in the deadly pride of her soul. Resolution comes at last, a resolution the more desperate and dreadful from the very weakness out of which it springs, and, revenging the wrongs of man upon his fellow-man, she “gives her honour to strangers and her years to the cruel.” Poor, hapless thing! In flaunting ornaments she decks the pride she once would gladly hide. Wantoning in giddy paces, she goeth forth the street; she stretcheth out the neck of pride; she looketh about for victims; but as yet with difficulty do her features muster up the harlot’s insolence. Nerving her sinking heart with intoxicating draughts, she lies in wait at the corner of the streets—the serpent under the painted, cankered flower. Poor, wandering Magdalen! Little do they know thy desolate heart who judge thy outward seeming. Oh, thou pure angel, who once guarded her as the tabernacle of God! Oh, those days of divine communion! Those bitter struggles to keep down thoughts that will keep rising up despite of all. Oh, chastity, thou sanctuary of peace! Jewel of the noble! Nobility even of the poor! Thou strength of beauty! Beauty even of the vile! Virgin purity! Thou joy of the just! Thou chariot of the saints! But thoughtless man has soiled thee for a careless whim of passion, and what becomes of woman? Whilst good, the best; whilst pure, the holiest; but once let her trifle with the sanctity of her person, but once allow even a breath to tarnish the integrity of her honour, and such is her delicacy, such the fineness of sensibility in which God has wrought her feelings—wisely designed to give her the very first intimations of approaching danger—that, no longer patient of herself, feeling no longer any confidence amongst her sex, not daring to look within herself, but flying the war of her sensations, and seeking on every side for an escape from reflection, she

pours her soul abroad through the avenues of her senses and becomes abandoned.

And evil custom is a cruel and life-destroying thing. And the trade of iniquity is a hazard, where all is loss ; a reckless squandering of life ; a pouring of the soul abroad, like molten dross upon the carnal senses, that hastens the very body with the soul to sure and swift destruction. The spotted cub has become the leopardess, going round about, crouching in cruel ambush, stealing on with thievish paces towards her victims, or springing, with a bestial fury, on her prey. Why should I shock your feelings with the flitting visions of her fast career ? Why, with the rapid alterations of her many coloured misery, until all becomes one undistinguished darkness ? The secret efforts to bear up and conceal the wastings of the frame ; the gloomy depression, with its desperations ; the fits of excitement, with its tremors ; then, again, returning sorrow with darkness hanging over the dreaded future, the ghastly features alternating with the red swollen flush, the devilish stamp upon the hardened brow, the destroying pestilence corroding the once gentle form, the loathing contempt, the bitter scorn, blasting the withered outcast, the vermined wretch, to whom a kind look would reveal a heaven, hiding her stricken head from the world's pointed finger, that very world she once so loved and trusted ; the fallen figure, with breast all broken, and the serpent feeding leisurely within upon the woe-worn heart ; the temples sunken on the glistering eye, that throb, and throb, and still—like a death-toll—throb ; the flitting soul, so horribly wrung, whilst a fevered life is still lingering about the last fibres of existence : the unwelcomed memory crowding up the spectres of her crimes, so changed in shape and feature ; the weakness of woman's tears at last ; the unchanged will ; the struggle——

But where all this long while has charity been away ;

meek-eyed charity, with her companion, mercy ; charity, that seeks the sinner ; charity, that yearns to pardon ; kind, patient, compassionate charity, that would sink the poor sufferer's infamies in her distresses, and, lowly condescending, wash her wounds in gentle tears ? Oh, charity ! thou first and last born Son of the Eternal Father. Oh, charity ! incarnate of purity ! thou who in so true a sense art seated on the mercy-seat, where, encircled by the cherubim, thou art occupied in dispensing calls to the guilty, comfort to the desolate, and pardon to the penitent, long hast thou anticipated the question of my prayer. Magdalen is still in her young career of crime, and thinks of any thing but charity. But charity thinks of her. The hour predestined by the divine mercy has come. With giddy paces she wantons through the streets ; she looks for a new misery ; she drops the bright venom from her snaky looks. She sees the multitude ; they surround the divine Jesus—his voice reaches her. She has heard of the fame of the most gracious of the children of men. She is secretly attracted. She is curious. She is in the crowd. Those eyes have met ! Oh ! that heavenly look ; so mild, yet so reproving. That insolence of stare is abashed ; that countenance is changed. Oh ! the sudden confusion born of grace. It was only a look, but a look like that which opened in the eyes of Peter a fountain of penitential tears. She is gone. But, wherever she goes, those eyes look through her soul ; a penetrating, all-pervading look, dividing the darkness, creating a new light, and revealing all the horrors of her state. How her past infidelities muster on the one side ; how her past graces are recalled on the other. How the enormities of her life contrast with those new sentiments of the divine goodness, what a depth of ignominy and what a depth of injustice ; and what a judgment looks down upon her soul. Oh, those days of innocence ! that father's blessing and that mother's smile. Oh ! Thou who once dwelt

within the pure soul, a divine and welcomed guest ! That abyss of mercy offended on the one side, that gulph of misery on the other ; and eternity, with its infinite circle, rounding both. Into which of these depths shall she plunge ? Poor Magdalen ! Whither shall the stricken deer go weep and bathe her wounds ? Those tears of grace are falling fast, fast extinguishing the fires of her shame. Her newly kindled fervour lights to new graces, and these to new repentance. But how atone, repair, and make amends ? The grace of conversion, my brethren, is a grace of re-creation ; it is a powerful grace, and demands a generous co-operation. It is a godlike director of heroic acts. It knows no tardy delays. It will stay for no compromise, and will allow of no reservation. Its generosity demands a prompt return of generosity. In that secret chamber where poor Magdalen finds herself, she cannot tell you how she has again come there ; each object but brings to her soul a new affliction. The price of crime is in her hand, its reproaches fill up the measure of her grief. What shall she do ? She is again departed. A more generous impulse sustains her through the street ; she has reached the door—“ Perfumer, hast thou any unguent most precious ? ” “ That unguent most precious, O woman, is for high priests and for kings, and not for thee or thy lovers. ” “ My lover is the High Priest of God and King of kings ; give me, then, of that unguent, and take all. ” She has heard that he is seated with the Pharisee. She regards not the idle crowd ; she hears not the festal music ; the officious domestics cannot stay her purpose. The true penitent fears not the remarks or opinions of the world, she has no dread of derision. All minor thoughts and feelings are lost in the one earnest wish to atone which absorbs her soul. All she feels is, that she is very miserable, and there is to be found great mercy. She has fallen at the feet of Him who looked upon her, her head is on the ground, that streaming hair mixed with those

streaming tears. That swelling heart has no room left for vanity, the pride of womanhood has departed ; all the soul is humbled at His feet, she has but one prolonged wish and desire to annihilate the past and to love rightly. Still that ignorant murmur of complaint. For, see ! the divine finger is pointed in rebuke. Harken to the heavenly voice. *“Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered thy house, thou gavest me no water to my feet, but she hath not ceased to wash my feet with tears, and to wipe them with her hair. Thou didst not pour ointment on my head, but she hath anointed my feet. Wherefore I say to thee, that many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.”* They murmured about justice and propriety ; but he spoke the words of mercy and of love. The zealots of pride, as is their custom, saw nothing but her crimes, and thought of nothing but condemnation ; whilst our meek and holy Redeemer saw but her repentance, and thought but of love. Never can this world be brought to understand the mercy of God, or to comprehend the generosity of his grace. How many a soul has become dear to heaven whilst the world still pursues her with its relentless anathemas. It is only pride that is a stranger to mercy—that pride which is so merciless to others. God is all mercy to the humble.

Henceforth, dear Christians, it is ours to contemplate the model of penitents. On many scenes of sacred history will Magdalen re-appear, but she is always the same penitent. Flying the world, loving solitude, and still to be found at the feet of her divine Lord, the only safe asylum for the penitent. Others may seek for pleasure in this world, but what has the penitent to say to its gratifications? They brought her nothing but bitterness. Let others walk the world in their vocation along that path of duty in which God has placed them, armed with pure intentions, strong resolves, and stronger grace. But what has the penitent to do there? Her experience tells her only of her own weak-

ness, and of its dangerous influence over her. She still sees but the destroying serpent crouched beneath the leaves of every flower that it presents to her view, and coiled within every fruit that it can offer for her acceptance. In one place only has she found safety and deliverance. Where should she be but at the feet of her compassionate Redeemer? There only has she found refuge, forgiveness, peace, kindness, and love.

When Jesus visited the house of this pious family—for he loved Lazarus and his sisters, says the Scripture—Martha is active and industrious in the service of his person, but Mary sat at his feet and heard his sacred words. Martha rebukes her conduct. But Jesus is still her protector and defender; she had chosen that better part which became her. What has the penitent to do with any unnecessary share in the distracting and dissipating occupations of life? The feet of her Redeemer is her better place.

Her brother Lazarus dies, and sleeps in his grave, and they have mourned his loss four days. Jesus, moved with love and compassion, draws near the place of interment with his disciples. Martha hastens with the crowds to meet him. But what has the penitent to do with crowds, even of mourners? The penitent seeks not even Jesus in the crowd. So “Mary sat weeping in the house.” It is only when she hears the message, which tells her that “the Master calls for her,” that, in the spirit of obedience, she goes forth from her retirement, and, says the Evangelist, “she fell down at his feet, weeping.”

When, in the few days that elapsed between the raising to life of her brother and the ignominious death of her Lord, at the very time that, on account of this manifest miracle, which had so occupied the souls of men, the chiefs of the Jewish people were conspiring his death, Jesus comes again to Bathania, and Martha serves whilst Lazarus sits with the guests at the table; Mary, with emotions of love which

prophetically warned her of all that was about to come upon her Lord, again anoints with precious ointments the feet of Jesus. She is, as usual, rebuked, for this world can never understand the spirit of the saintly lovers of Jesus. But her Lord again exalts the fidelity of her love. The penitent is not to be hindered from the impulse of her fervent love. She has done it for His burial. Wherever the gospel is preached, throughout the world, shall the devout conduct of this penitent be proclaimed.

And, in that hour of inexpressible anguish, when her very Lord seemed without help, when all have abandoned him; when in desolate agony, He has no other comfort to offer but a share of his cross and of his ignominy. Others may abandon him and go their way; but where shall the poor penitent go? What has she to lose, except her Lord? What has she to fear, except herself? "And there stood by the cross," says the evangelist, "Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalen." There she adheres, and there she grows, she is still at those sacred feet. When dusty and toil-worn she bathed and kissed them. What else shall she do when they are tortured and agonized for her sake? She then anointed them with unction; they now anointed her with blood. Happy exchange! It is the privilege of penitent love to suffer with her Lord, to suffer the reproaches of this world, and to adhere to his cross. Happy penitent! But the world can never comprehend thee nor Him with whom thou art in sufferings.

Her Lord has expired. There remains but his mangled body on the cross. Shall she go away? She cannot follow his victorious spirit, but she can still adhere to those drained and exhausted feet—she can follow them to the tomb.

Amidst all the terrors and alarms of the events which follow; whilst the sun retiring leaves the earth to darkness—whilst the rocks are rent, and all nature is disturbed with

convulsion—whilst the living are troubled and dismayed, and the dead arise and appear unto many. What terrors, however unearthly and supernatural, can appal the soul to whom this whole world is now one dreary blank? Amidst all the horrors of that night the penitent Magdalen sits watching at the tomb, alone in love and sorrow she sits watching. It was no time for the poor penitent to rest and slumber.

On the following day, being the first of the week, the evangelist again lifts the curtain of the night, and again discovers the penitent approaching to the tomb, alone and weeping. She observes the changes at the tomb. She hastens to Peter with the intelligence. Peter and John approach and enter the tomb, but without solving the mystery they depart, leaving Magdalen still at the tomb weeping. At length comes the reward of all her constancy and of her faithful love. She thinks it is the gardener approaching. She asks for her Lord. Then the joyful recognition. "Mary!" exclaims her Lord, revealing himself. "Rabboni!" Oh, master! She is at his feet, those dear, divine, familiar feet. But no. "Touch me not, Mary, I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go tell the brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father; to my God and your God." She is made the first of evangelists; the apostle to the apostles, the first witness and the first messenger of the resurrection. So perfectly does faithful repentance and penitent love re-establish the soul in the friendship of God and in the plenitude of his grace.

And history goes on to say, that after witnessing the last of the visible presence of her Lord on earth, when, with the apostles and disciples assembled on Mount Olivet, she heard his last words, and, whilst he blessed them, saw him ascend, and the cloud come between him and her gazing vision—she retired and immersed herself in yet deeper solitude, weep-

ing and praying in that cavern-abode whose only furniture was the cross, only remembering that world she had for ever left before God, praying, fervently praying, for all sinners, feeding her soul with the invisible presence of her Lord, whose feet she never leaves, still constant and faithful to penitent love, until, after many years, her Lord is pleased to release her from her corporeal prison-house, and she is admitted at last to embrace his feet in their everlasting glory.

Parents. Would you know with what a solicitude you should guard your entrusted charge? Mothers. Would you feel in time the dangers which, away from beneath your notice, will gather round your child? Fathers. It is your sublime duty to be the visible providence of God over those innocents in whom resides your second life. Would you understand the circumspection which this care demands? Daughters, virgin daughters! That purity of soul so delicate, would you feel its beauty by the contrast? That holy integrity of heart will not allow itself to be trifled with—one thoughtless moment may stain for ever its inviolate sanctity—one careless step may expose its sacred integrity to blight—one breath may tarnish, one thought may destroy its exquisite bloom. You are no longer then what once you were. A painful remembrance, a dream of the happy past may return at times, to remind you of your once virgin dignity of soul. Heedless young men. Would you trace the consequences of what you are pleased to call an hour of trifling, and survey the history of what you are pleased to call a moment of passing folly? And should there be any poor strayed lamb of the flock, who, bleeding and mangled from the by-ways, and thirsting from the fever of her heart, has secretly crept into this assembly, in the hope of some healing for her wounds;—go ponder this story of the penitent.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

THE general doctrine of the following discourse is that of St. Augustine, the doctor, by eminence, of divine love. His writings are inexhaustible in arguments and suggestions on this exalted theme; its spirit pervades and animates almost every thing he has written. Some passages, towards the conclusion of the discourse, are almost literally taken from this great Father, from whose writings on this subject the French preachers have transcribed at considerable lengths. The writer is aware that the illustration drawn from the theory of light is not adapted to a general audience, though he thinks it may not prove unacceptable to the general reader. The influence of the beautiful little work of Count Stolberg will be perceptible to those acquainted with it. The transition from the creation to the fall of man has an illustration or two, drawn expressly from the "Bookling of Love." Will no one give to us this admirable little treatise, so perfectly adapted to our language and modes of thought? The present writer com-

menced the task in the course of his last voyage from Australia ; but, feeling his limited knowledge of the German tongue, and wanting time, he abandoned it. In the hope of wakening attention, and provoking some German scholar to the task, feeling at the same time how much it will illustrate his present and favourite theme, he ventures to offer a literal translation of the sublime lyric which resumes the general argument of the book and concludes it. It is entitled

THE SONG OF THE SWAN.

Thee praiseth the spring,
Thee, oh eternal love !
Thee praiseth the winter too.

The lips thy love lisper
Of suckling babes,
Thy beam melts the frost of the hearts of the aged to
softly o'erflow.

Oh Father of the light
Of all-hallowed truth !

Oh Father of the glow
Of all-godly love !

Let thy light shine forth,
With enkindling ray,

On this greyworn heart,
That to-day, once again,

I, with trembling hand,

May seize on Sion's harp, and venture my soul thereon.

Oh, when thy love descends,
It melts away the snow of years, and, ah !
Melts, too, away the numbing ice of sin.

Glow we forth, then,
In all-hallowed love,

To which love everlasting so many things pardons !

From eternity was it,
And will be, which now is.

From eternity saw He,
 And will see, and sees,
 The Father his infinite substance ;
 Saw and His vision streamed forth,
 Will forth-stream, doth stream,
 His Eternal Son !

From eternity flowed forth,
 And will flow, and flows,
 The thought of the Father, the Word,
 The Eternal Son !

From Eternity glowed forth,
 And will glow, and glows,
 The Father's love unto the Son,
 The love of the Son to the Father,
 Whilst both beamed forth,
 Will beam, do beam,
 The Eternal Holy Spirit !

It flowed out forth, that Eternal Word :
 It will again ! And then upsprung,
 As the sun up from the sea,
 With his heavens the world out of ancient night,
 And as birds, midst the waving of Lebanon's cedars,
 As morning awakens, out-tune their sweet song,
 So the angels out-tune their song of bliss,
 In the circling heavens of harmony full.

Eternal love, love-fountain, tell, ah tell !
 All the heavens, and souls, and all spirits,
 To well forth, to wave forth, to beam forth,
 To sun themselves in thy living light,
 To live enlivened of thy breath,

For the life of life art thou, oh love !
 Out sounds thy praise, oh Almighty One !
 All-wise, all-worthy to be loved,
 In the heavens, in numberless suns, earths, moons ;
 And, then, of thy children full is the world, all full !

Thee praiseth also man, thy child,
 From the atom earth.

Thou raisest him up, the enlivened dust,
 Breathest the life of thy breath within,
 And after thine image him formest !

Thine image he prophaned! He fell!
 Wide open yawned the abyss
 To swallow down his prey;
 Then—"Rendest thou the Heavens,"
 Eternal love! "Thou comest down."
 "The mountains melt before thy face!"
 "This birth must needs be the birth of the Lord,
 "Whose coming is from the beginning forth, is afar,
 from eternity."
 Dust he became to raise up dust;
 To rescue the slave of death from death,
 Thou gavest, oh fountain of love!
 Thyself to death!
 Oh ocean of love!
 There stood on thy strand the sons of light,
 "They longed to look adown the deep,"*
 Adoring, they plunge in,
 Upspring they again on high with their song of love.
 And we?—Oh compassion, compassionate us!—
 We forget that thine, who the Heavens did rend,
 In the cradle for us wept,
 On the cross for us expired.
 Thou wooest us,
 As the youth the maid,
 But sunk in the trifles of guilty delight,
 Borne on by the follies of swollen conceit,
 We turn us prudely from thee.
 Oh thou! who from thy Father's breast
 Camest forth to visit our exile,
 Make us loathe from our heart deluding joys!
 And bend down thou, "to thy sweet yoke,"
 Our neck of pride with all its folly!
 Deliver us from thy foe, the world!
 From all its allurements, deliver us, God!
 Only thou, oh endless One! only thou,
 Art the living light of the longing soul,
 Her strength, her stay,
 Her peace within, her health, her bliss!
 What shines, what beams not with thy love,

* "On whom the angels longed to look down."—1 St. Pet. i. 12.

Is a vaporous mist upon night's marshpool.

What glows, what burns not with thy love,
Is the dark deed of shame on the altar of God.

Oh give ! thou who sufferedst for us !
Oh give us the sacred sufferings of love.

Enkindle thou our frozen breast
With the wounds of love.

Let the wounds of sorrow be melted away

In the wounds of love,
Until the soul, thy longing bride,

Thou bring home to thy kingdom of bliss,
Of that bliss which thy love thither brings.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

"If I have not charity, I am nothing."

1 Cor. xiii. 2.

THE Catholic preacher, my brethren, has but one subject. He may present it in many views; he may exhort his hearers to many duties; he may urge them apparently from countless motives. But all these various motives spring from one; they all conspire to the establishment of one truth and point to one duty. In all her exhortations, and even in her reproaches, religion speaks but in the various voices of this one precept, the offspring of this magnificent truth. In all her teachings, revelation proclaims, with an almighty voice, this truth; whilst nature herself does not refuse to confess its sovereign power. What truth may this be, which, wider than the heavens, is, like God himself, diffused through every portion of the universe, and demands the tribute of our souls? My brethren, that truth is this, that our God is love, and that our God loves us; that he has created our spirits to love him; and that to love him is our duty and our joy.

Come, dear Christian souls, and let us walk to-day in the pleasant and vast extensions of God's love. It is as universal as his nature. Wherever we are, we are surrounded with the holy love of our merciful God. Whether we con-

sider thee, oh my God ! in thine own goodness, or whether we consider thee in thy goodness to us ; whether we regard thee as good in thy creatures, or whether we are made sensible of thy good gifts to our souls ; thy love, oh my God ! is as infinite and inexhaustible as it is past our comprehension. Go wherever we may, defile our souls to prove ourselves unworthy as we choose, we can never escape out of thy goodness—it will only overwhelm us with a deeper ingratitude. Of all the gifts of that eternal goodness, the greatest is the power which is given us to love the God who loves us ; and if, by our folly, we hinder not its divine operations within us, it is designed to obtain for us the full possession of his goodness with its eternal weight of glory. How shall we exalt enough the praises of divine charity ? Reason cannot comprehend, the mind cannot embrace, even faith cannot attain to the full greatness of the love of God for us. Only the heart, and such a heart as our God has himself prepared and filled with grace, can feelingly understand some little of his goodness. And even in this heart, the profoundest conviction is, how little she as yet comprehends of the greatness of the love of God. The true knowledge of the love of God grows out of the exercise of that love ; and it is only in the degree in which we ourselves love God, that we grow more and more sensible how much God loves us. Let us love God, my brethren, and from the midst of this love let us celebrate the greatness of the love of God for us.

How, alas ! shall I speak, and what can I say ? For, to know charity as she is, we ought to see God—“ God is charity ;” and he has veiled himself from our eyes, for he would have us to love him as faithfully as he deserves before we behold him as he is. To speak of charity as she deserves, we ought to speak from the glowing bosom of God, amidst the rapt and burning seraphs ; and I, alas ! am a sinful spirit, clad in a vesture of mortal clay, and

exiled far from God. My lips have scarcely been touched with the fervid coal from the altar of charity, and my efforts, when I would speak of heavenly love, are as the lisps of the infant's tongue which feebly struggles for an utterance. How then, my brethren, shall we be enabled to come to the excellent knowledge of the divine love? The apostle of love, St. John, informs us, that "Charity comes from God." It is his gift, and we must entreat it of him. Another great apostle of love, St. Paul, tell us that, "The charity of God is spread abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us." Let us then invoke the heavenly gift; and let us implore of our heavenly Father that he will vouchsafe to send into the hearts of his children the Holy Spirit of love. But it first becomes us to collect our hearts in silence, and in peace; for in silence and in peace only will that Spirit condescend to dwell. Let then the cares, and the turmoils, and the strifes of your mortal existence for the present cease to trouble you. Let these walls which contain the body, withhold the spirit also from her earthly wanderings. For this temple, this sanctuary, and he who, in a truer sense than in the old law, sanctifies it by his presence, dwelling with us in the mercy-seat, on the ark, between the cherubim, should be witness to no thoughts but such as are holy and tending heavenwards.

Come then, O Holy Spirit! enkindle and renew our hearts. Give thou us of that wisdom which sitteth with thee on thy throne; give thou us of that fire which came in tongues on the apostles; give thou us of that simplicity which came in the dove upon Jesus; that whilst we hear thy spirit, we may receive it, and receiving, love with all our heart and strength, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

What then, my brethren, is charity? Charity is love—it is the love of God—his love infused into our souls. It is the returning of love for love to God, who first loved us, and who says, "With a perpetual love have I loved thee,

therefore have I drawn thee to me, in the fulness of my compassion for thee."

I am aware, indeed, that, since the practice of this heavenly virtue has decayed and become diminished, the thoughts of men have also changed with their affections; and this very word, *charity*, which once spoke but the love of God, has lost much in consequence from the purity of its meaning in our common habits of speaking. It is taken to signify that feeling of compassion which is drawn from us at the sight of our brother in distress; and for that aid which we extend to him in his afflictions. But this alone is not even a part of charity. It may be but the expression of a very natural feeling towards a friend, in whose heart we have had a share, and in whose afflictions we have our own portion. Had he been a stranger, should we have done and felt the same in his regard? Or it may arise from our natural sympathies and apprehensions, as the liable children of one common family of want and misery to which we all belong. If, by some extraordinary privilege, we were especially exempted from all chance and danger of the like calamities, would the aid we give to others be as warm and real? It may be but the tender overflowings of a sensible and delicate nature, which finds sweet satisfactions in their outward indulgence; it may spring from vanity; or it may be the necessity of our position which prompts to what, in the abuses of language, is called charity; but, unless they are sanctified by a holier motive, these are nothing but the mere natural acts of the natural man; they have not in them even a touch of the grace of charity. But when, my brethren, in the exercise of generous acts and kind emotions, we not merely regard our afflicted fellow-mortal, but one also who is the child in distress of our heavenly Father; when we are moved not merely at the sight of our flesh and blood in its sufferings, but at the sight of the suffering member of Christ; when we consider that suffering brother, not only

as our own reflected image in calamity, but especially contemplate him as the image which God has coined in a living mould, and impressed with his eternal likeness, and on which he has written his own superscription and right of dominion, then does our benevolence become a visible proof and undeniable expression of our charity and love of God.

But let us first look beyond the exercise of charity in the creature; and, borne on the wings of that Spirit which we have invoked, let us ascend to the first fountain of the divine love. For God is himself its author, and all his works and gifts are the substantial exercise of its power and the unbounded proofs of its greatness. His love commands what his power executes. In love he created us, in love he redeemed us, in love he sustains us, by love he sanctifies us, and his love is spread abroad in our hearts by his Holy Spirit dwelling within us. What, my brethren, is our soul? Or, what can she do? Or, whither can she tend? What resource has she in herself, or what reason for her very existence, without the love of God? Would you understand how the love of God is the very life of the soul, and the sole end of her existence? Listen, and I will unfold to you the generations of celestial charity.

In the beginning, before there was any time or creation, God *was*. He was alone, but he was not alone and solitary. For within himself, being in every manner infinite, he enjoyed infinite communication and infinite happiness. The Eternal Father for ever contemplating himself, beheld that Eternal Thought, that Infinite Word, which expresses his eternal perfections, his Eternal Son; the Eternal Son ever loving the Eternal Father, as the Father loves the Son; their mutual eternal love breathes the Holy Spirit—Three in One. Thus in himself did God ever enjoy infinite knowledge, infinite society, infinite communication of love, and infinite happiness. But he who is infinitely per-

fect is infinitely good ; and he who is infinitely good seeks to communicate the enjoyment of his goodness wherever it can be diffused. But what more can he do ? The eternal and the infinite is all filled with the love and the enjoyment of God. What is there that remains ? There remains that which is neither infinite nor yet exists, save in his power. Christians, he could create, and, in creating, could infuse the love and enjoyment of himself into the beings that he made. God spoke, and this world rose up in beauty at his word ; yet, beautiful as it was when it came forth from the hands of its Creator, before the sin of man had changed it, this world had no soul, it knew not God. Again God spoke, saying, “ Let there be light.” And there was light ; but it was not the light of mind, and could not see God. And when he commanded the green herbs to spring upon the face of the earth, and the trees to rise towards heaven with their seeds and fruits—they all rose up at once. But they knew not who gave them their seeds and fruits. He declared them good ; but they knew not his goodness. They had no heart to love him, no sense to enjoy him, no tongue to proclaim his praises. But he spoke again ; and then again—life filled the air on countless wings, life stirred through all the seas, life walked and crept and ran through all the earth—the world was filled with quick and breathing life—the airs resounded with the animated cries of their content. But the content of these living creatures was in themselves. They had not the life of spirit. They knew not who had made them. They could not rise by any power of resemblance to their Creator. They were unfit to receive the gift of the communion of God. This, then, is not the end of the work of God, it is only the beginning and the preparation. It is only the palace, as St. Gregory Nazianzen observes, which God has built, provisioned, and adorned, for the noble guest he is about to send. A being is required of heaven as well as of earth—of earth, to hold and represent the things of

the earth over which he is sent to rule—of heaven, to live in the union of God, to know him, and to love him. That in this creature heaven and earth might meet. That “the earth might be filled with the knowledge of the Lord,” and “the heavens proclaim his glory” through the soul of man, and all these creatures find a voice to speak to their Creator through his thoughtful love and gratitude. That as from the ocean the waters invisibly and mysteriously arise and spread themselves, and come down upon the whole earth to give it life and fruitfulness, and then gather themselves together, mysteriously attracted from drops to liquid threads, which flow together down every slope in rills, and so to valley streams, and then to tributaries, until, united within the bosom of some majestic river, they again re-enter that ocean whence they came ; so all these creatures, serving to each other’s use, and all generously flowing to the use and fruitful service, and filling with the knowledge of their good the musing heart of man, may return, through the grateful outpourings of his bosom, back to the great ocean of God.

Hitherto God has spoken, and all things were made by his word. But now, the Almighty approaches the work that is greater than all this world; he no longer uses a single word. We see the three persons of the adorable Trinity rise up as it were from counsel and bend down from the heavens in the words, “Let us make man to our own likeness.” And with his eternal hands he took and fashioned the clay, and he breathed into Adam the spirit of life, and man arose a living soul, endowed with a boundless capability of knowing and a boundless capability of loving, which nothing less than the infinite God himself can satisfy, and which, though entempered in an earthly body, yet, formed and tempered as it was by the hand of God, was then immortal and of perfect beauty. And man is inexcusable if he mistake his destiny. For God wrote with his finger upon

his heart—with his grace he wrote within it this indestructible law as his card of direction to unutterable happiness :—
“ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy mind, and with all the powers of thy strength.”

Christians, see the nobleness and the dignity of your being, and all the magnificence of your destination. God himself has not a nobler end than that for which He destines you. Assisted by this Spirit, to rule and subject to his adorable will the creature over which he gives us dominion for a while, and then, to be carried by his Spirit from the creature, unto the vision, the love and the enjoyment of his own eternal glory. What a creature then is man, if he will but know himself! What a godlike existence may he not reach, if he will but love God! What an infinite object grows within him when he begins to leave himself! And, alas! to what an unworthy littleness does his soul contract herself when he adheres to that poor idol of his pride! For man cannot fill his soul substantially with himself. She is but a capacity—a chamber to receive a guest—she is little or great, glorious or ignominious, and takes all her qualities from what she receives, embraces, and entertains. She is a cell, a prison for sin and punishment, a house for mortal and passing dwellers, or a temple of the living God—even a heaven, where his glorious visions are revealed, according as she receives sin, the creature, or the glorious God for her guest. When she falls from God into herself she is indeed poor and empty—the mere faculties without their object—the power and the thirst to embrace an infinite joy, embracing nothing. And hence her restlessness and all her discontent. Witness those thoughts that traverse all the world; and still not satisfied, look back through all ages; and still not satisfied, with restless speculation they anticipate the possibilities of the future; and still not satisfied, they wander to the stars; and still unsated, convert them into

worlds; and still, even with these endless prospects of creation, is our spirit unfilled as before, and she sighs to know more and to embrace some one infinite truth: and still unsatisfied—for what is all the fulness of the mind if the toiling heart be vacant of content—attaching herself first to one creature, then to another, relinquishing each by turns in weariness and disappointment, passing still untaught by the past, with the restless wings of her affections, from thought to thought and object to object, and finding enduring content in none—for none nor all of creatures can fill the infinite craving of our heart to love something infinitely great and worthy, restless and fevered in soul with our alternate hopes and discontents, as every new hope arising from the creature is destroyed or disappointed—there is the great ocean—God: there lies the beach—this universe: there is a shell upon that beach—this world. Can that shell contain that ocean? Neither can this world contain the love for which your soul came forth from God—so boundless, so mysterious, so unfathomable are its wants. But “Do thou join thyself unto eternity,” said the Spirit of God to St. Augustine, when, wearied with the creature, he sought the Creator; “Do thou join thyself unto eternity, and thou shalt become eternal and find rest.” “I had turned myself to every creature,” exclaims the same great saint, recounting his agonizing search for the supreme good of his soul; “I asked them one by one, ‘Art thou my God?’ And the earth, and sea, and stars, and sun, and every creature with one voice replied, ‘He made us.’ And I turned at length to thee, and found that thou hast made us, great God, for thyself, and that our hearts are restless until they repose in thee.”

In short, my brethren, we are nothing but whatever we love, and our life is that which lives within the affections of our soul. And as all bodies upon this earth are drawn towards its centre, so have all spirits a natural striving

towards God—who is their centre of attraction. Satan resisted this striving of his spirit towards eternal light, and resisted the attraction with which God drew him towards eternal love, and he found himself in darkness and distress. But, could one ray of the love of God find its way into his dark, tormented interior, and straightway “on the wings of the morning” would he reascend to the eternal.—It can never be.

Tempted by Satan, man also fell. Through pride and sensuality he was allured to his transgression. And that great love within his soul, which, when one pure and directed towards God, was the very life of his spirit, became divided into two loves, both of which, turning him away from God into the by-paths of the creature, lead him alike to corruption. For, partly carried away with restless discontent amongst outward and sensual creatures, and then again brought back in very weariness upon himself—his outward sensuality defiles his soul and makes him like the serpent, crawling with his belly on the ground—his inward proud self-love makes him like the same serpent, when, starting and collecting himself from the ground he has defiled with his crawling, he turns and twines himself in crooked ways about himself. Had it not pleased God to have mercy on fallen man, his distempered, self-loving pride, like that of the fallen angel, must have broken out into eternal hatred against God. Let us but imagine to ourselves what would become of this earth, were it to withdraw itself, by some gift of inward liberty, from its path around the sun, and to sink, assaulted on every side with chaotic tempests, through the boundless solitudes of dark and empty space. This is but a feeble image of the miserable state of distracted torment that dwells within that spirit which God has utterly abandoned and renounced. But God, who from eternity beheld his fall, from eternity had mercy on him; and He displayed his mercy as well as his justice;

but his mercy he puts first, that fallen man, repenting of his fall, might make appeal to her, even as to justice itself, disarmed of its terrors, and appeased by the highest act of God's highest love shewn forth in the sacrifice of his eternal Son.

Here stand we on the unfathomable depths of the riches of the love of God.

The presence of God within his spirit, the love of God within his heart, the communion of God through all his soul, partaking of the grace of immortality from the mysterious tree of life, whilst his familiar companions were the angels, man ventured to question the word of God; he daringly impugned the mystery of death; he sought to know what God alone retained the right to know; he aspired to be as God. Questioning the truth of the divine word, truth left him. Provoking death, death came upon him, and he lost the communion of the tree of life. Aspiring to be as God, God was compelled to abandon him. Choosing the proudly reasoned faith of Satan, he was left in the communion of Satan, left to feel the full weight of the yoke of the master whom he had chosen. What a fall! and what a change! God has withdrawn the grace of his communion from faithless man, and love and joy have retired to heaven. There he lies, prostrate and helpless, beneath the dreadful mockery of the sacred Trinity. "Lo! Adam hath become as one of us!" Adam is become as if a person of the Godhead, "knowing good and evil. Lest, then, he again put out his hand, and eat of the tree of life, and live for ever, let us cast him forth from Paradise." The dearth of God pervades his heart, malediction has entered his soul; his body is condemned to pain, to disease, to toil, and their fruit, death. He knows good and evil: good he knows, by memory of its loss; evil, by its possession of his soul. A god in misery—worshipping himself instead of loving the God of glory. It is the history of every fall, from that hour to

this. There behold him, brought to an infinite vileness below God, whose truth can only describe his condition by bitter mockery of his creature. Between that heaven, the birth-place of his soul, and that valley of death where he finds his place, there extends a gulph he has no power to pass. How, indeed, can he reascend, having nothing within him greater than himself? How can he rise to God, but by that union with God and the action of that grace which has departed from him? The Delilah of temptation has shorn away the locks of strength which, beyond his nature, God had given to this Samson, and he lies deluded, in his native weakness, on the sensual lap of his crime. God ridicules him; we, his children, mourn, and his tempters deride and scorn his want of help. His spiritual eyes are plucked from him; he can no longer see the light of God. That celestial light falls upon him, and God's word speaks to his ears; but there is no longer the same power. The eye of his former faith is extinct. The ear for truth is diseased. He staggers, he is troubled, he seeks, with vain efforts, to hide himself from God. He would gladly rise to better things; they only afflict him with the thoughts that they are past. Incapable of receiving the light of truth, he turns away from it, as if its antipathies to his falseness repelled him, and he falls back, more through weariness than choice, into his darksome state. The very things into which he throws himself, seeking in vain a relief from the creature, but add unto his pain and weariness.

And is there no help? Is all lost, and for ever lost? Yes, lost! Broken and empty of love is the immortal heart of man. Nothing burns within it but the lurid fire of concupiscence; nothing ascends from out of it but the smoke of his gloomy pride, which ascends against and seeks, in its hostility, to obscure the very countenance of God.

Here stand we on the unfathomable abyss of God's merciful love! for, O mystery of mercy! God loves his crea-

ture still. Though broken and defiled, God beholds his image still. A voice breaks the astonished silence of heaven, and the Eternal Word speaks. Is it some new creation coming forth? Two creatures have fallen in their liberty from God. What a feeble thing is every creature! Is some new order of spirits about to be created, that they may receive the lost possessions of angels and of men? Oh the exceeding love of God! The archangels hear the Word of the Eternal Son; that "Word which was in the beginning with God, through which all things were made."—"Sacrifice and oblations thou wilt not receive;" they can never atone: "In the beginning of thy decrees is it written that I should do thy will—behold, I come." And "God so loved the world, as to give his only beloved Son," who "loved us, and gave himself for us, a sacrifice and propitiation for our sins." He stood before his Eternal Father, clothed with the flesh of death. "Father, thou lovest thy Eternal Son, pardon this flesh! Sacrificed it must be, destroyed concupiscence must be, this flesh must die. Thou hast decreed it, thy glory must be repaired. He aspired to be God, lo! I have become man; man is now lawfully one with God. Pardon this flesh of sin. Concupiscence reigns in the blood, it must be shed. O pardon thou guilty man, for my humiliations and my love." And God so loved the world, as to give up his only beloved and Eternal Son, that they who receive him may not perish, but have eternal life. By the agonies of his cross he atoned for our sensuality; by the ignominies of his cross he atoned for our pride. "Father, forgive them!" was his cry amidst his torments. With his tortured arms expanded, he embraced us in the prayer of his sacrifice. "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," he exclaimed to the Father, expiring. "Thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of truth," continues the royal prophet, in the name of all mankind, as he contemplated the bitter sacrifice afar off. God's love for

us is strong as life ; God's love for us is strong as death ; all the floods of our ingratitude shall never overwhelm his love.

Tell us, then, adorable and suffering Redeemer, by what sufferings on our part, and under what heavy law shall we be saved. "Thou shalt love," he says, "the Lord thy God." And is this all, divine Saviour ? It is, he proclaims, the one thing needful ; mine to suffer, thine to love. This is the whole of the law, the whole of the prophets, and the whole of man. But will not gratitude, will not joy, will not thy suffering, will not thy love—does not all heaven and earth reflect thine own inspiration to love thee ? Is it not our misery not to love thee ? Need we then a precept to love ? There must be some great mystery in these words, something more than love implied in this command. Tell us, then, divine Saviour, after what law and what measure we are to love our God ? For where thou art not our guide we are ever on the verge of some abyss of danger. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole mind." But this is to love him with all my intention. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart." But this is to love him with all my desires. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole strength." But this is to love him in the exercise of all my powers and faculties, and to direct all their issues unto him. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul." Ah ! this is to embrace him in all my being, as well as in all my acts. The law and measure, then, of loving God is to love him beyond all bounds and all measure, and to know no end or cessation of loving him. It is to love him as much in adversity as in prosperity, in dejection as in joy, in thoughts and deeds as in words and prayers. It is to behold the gifts of his love in all these things equally ; for the faithful lover of God knows experimentally, with St. Paul, that all things, prosperous and adverse, whichever befall us, are directed towards us with the wis-

dom of love by the same Almighty hand. When they come in the form of afflictions, they are the chastenings of his love ; in the form of persecutions, calumnies, and insults, are not these trials of his love, so many needful purifyings and strengthenings of that charity, which, left without trials, would remain, not merely imperfect and unproved, but even without security ? “ All things,” says the apostle, “ work together unto good to those who love God.” When the love of God holds possession of our soul, all things else become instruments for her use, and means for her continual growth, and every creature begins to speak to us of the love of God ; each field, each flower, and every countenance reflects his love ; and all the virtues but follow in her train and act by her spirit. What, then, indeed, are all the virtues but the various forms which the love of God assumes, according to the varying circumstances in which she is placed, that she may be enabled more perfectly to accomplish the will of God ? Just as the angelic spirits have put on human forms to execute their Heavenly Master’s will to man, so does the spirit of divine love assume the form of every virtue as each new circumstance demands their aid to execute the will of Eternal Love. Thus all the commandments of the law are but so many forms of the love of God and of our neighbour, whilst the love of our neighbour itself is but a part of our exercise of the love of God. And what is perfect faith ? But the love of God receiving the word of his truth and feeding herself on its mysteries. And what is divine hope ? But the same confiding love, looking onwards to possession of her glories. And blessed mourning ? But the sighing over the long delays of their coming. And humility ? But love emptying her of self, that God may reign. By prudence she adapts herself to those circumstances in which the will of God has placed her ; by justice her love towards her neighbour is equitably measured out ; by fortitude she

lovingly bears the trials which are sent to purify her ; whilst by temperance she keeps aloof the intrusive attachment of the creature ; and by chastity she keeps holy that tabernacle wherein this pure spirit dwells ; and her prayer is the voice of her love, as the daily oblation of herself is that holocaust to God by which this holy love fulfils all justice.

Withdraw the sun from amongst us, and reduce this *temple* to darkness ; it is an emblem of our soul without God. Take away all hopes of its return, and what would be our dismay ? It is but a faint image of the soul without hope. Let now but a ray of heavenly light re-enter, and our peace, our hope, our life revives. And as that light of the body which is so essential to our earthly existence, pure and simple as it seems to be, is at once the principle of light, of warmth, and of vitality ; so also that pure and divine charity, spread within our soul, is at the same time our light, our life, and our love. Let the light of the sun of justice shine upon me ; the light, O my Lord ! of the countenance of thy love. When God alone is present to us the light of his love shines within us in its pure and simple radiance, it is the love of God, and only the love of God, which animates us, free of every intermixture from the creature ; but, as when we oppose to the light of the day one obstacle or another, it changes its form and takes a hundred different colours, so also with that divine love ; for let some doubt of reason intrude between her and God, she takes the colour of faith ; let it be some stumbling-block of alarm, and she takes the colour of confidence ; let it be a difficulty arising against her faith, and she takes the colour of discretion ; is it sensual allurement, she takes the tone of temperance ; if wrong lie before her, she is then justice ; does self-esteem attempt to rise ? she shews the violet of humility ; does persecution or suffering beset her ? and she crimson into fortitude—the memory of her sins spreads over her the purple of mourning ; but should she find some actual stain upon her

purity, then does this holy love assume in her grief the more sombre hues of repentance ; but let every creature and every created obstacle be again withdrawn, let her spirit again find herself alone, with God alone, without any let or hindrance between her and the full effulgence of his love, and it again becomes one pure and simple radiance of light, of life, and of love.

Let us love then, my brethren, let us love God ; let us only be solicitous to increase the love of God, and with that divine love will every other virtue be our own without labour : “ All good things came to me together with her,” says Solomon, speaking of the wisdom of this love. Love God, and do whatever you please, is the maxim of the saints ; it is that perfect law of freedom described by St. Paul.

“ What then, my brethren, shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus ?” Shall *afflictions* ? Charity is the comforter of the afflicted. Shall *anguish* ? He has said, Call on me in the day of distress, and I will deliver thee. Shall *persecutions* ? No, for blessed are they who suffer persecution for his love. Shall *hunger and nakedness* ? No, for blessed are they who suffer poverty in the spirit of *His* love, who, “ being rich, became poor for our sakes ;” the kingdom of love is declared to be their special possession. What is there we ought not to be prepared to suffer that we may possess this excellent love of God ? For God is our good, our only good, the good of all goods, our supreme and sovereign joy ; we must stop at nothing beneath his love, and what shall we find above it ? What can be worth our seeking but our supreme and sovereign bliss. This can only be God himself, and there is no union with him but this union of charity. Nor can this charity be the love of a divided heart, by sovereign right He claims the whole : “ My child,” he says, “ give me thy heart.” Others may we love by His right in them, but none by their own right independent of his love. What

then shall separate us from the excellent love of God? Shall *death*? But there is no death save that of the soul, and if the love of God be in the soul, the death of the body is the beginning of her life. Shall *life*? But God is the source of life. Shall the *trials of adversity*? But the more we love, the less we feel them. Shall *things present, or things to come*? But the heart which loves God sees nothing but Him in all that is around her. Shall *things high, or things profound*? If by this is meant knowledge, away with every curiosity that would separate us from God. If heaven and hell—is there then another heaven besides God? Or is there another hell besides the privation of God? I am certain, then, that in all these things there is nothing that should separate us, but every thing to unite us the more intimately to the excellent love of God.

My brethren, do we love God? Have we even begun to love God? Do we even so far as effectually desire to love God? Is it not quite certain that we love many things more than God? Then, we do not love God! Let us bring this dreadful fact to the proof. And what better proof can we have than the test proposed by that great lover, and teacher of divine love, St. Augustine? -

Whatever you have, or hope to have, on earth, says this Father, you are far away from that heavenly country, which should be the one great object of your desires. Can he love his country who finds a joy in exile? And can he love God whose heart feels no emotion towards God? You may flatter yourself that you love God, whilst you feel not the habitual desire of coming to his presence, nor the habitual regret of being deprived of his countenance; but, if such be the case, so far from loving God, you have not even begun to love God. Let your heart answer my questions, continues the saint. I am not going to ask any thing of your spirit, some idle sophistry might start up to elude the difficulty. I appeal to your conscience and to the good

sense of your heart. Listen to me then, and, from your very heart, answer me. You have something each of you, more or less, in this world, and you desire, most of you at least desire, to have more. What then, if God were to say to you, Whatever you have, keep; whatever even you desire to have, take all. Have no fear of losing them. Have, I say, no fear of losing them, for nothing shall be allowed to trouble you or disturb their safety. No envy, no covetousness, no sickness, no death, shall come to take them from you. They are yours eternally, unchangeably, unconditionally, only—you shall never see God. What sensation is now passing within your heart? My brethren, which is your choice, if God were to make the proposal? Would you rather enjoy the good things of this life in everlasting peace, at peril of not seeing God? Or are you ready to renounce them, and every part of them, for the hope of enjoying God? What says the secret voice within your heart? Ah! if you waver, if you doubt but for an instant, you do not love God—you have not even begun to love God. For it is quite clear that God does not hold in your heart the absolute precedence of all the things of this life. What thing do you value most on earth? Your good name. Well! Let some one take it away; do you love God enough to sacrifice to him your resentment? You know not! Then you do not love God!

Alas! And woe upon us. Let us confess the truth, at least. To the honour of eternal goodness, let us confess our injustice. Then we do not love God! Our Father! we are the children of thy love, and we do not love thee. Thy very image loves thee not, though made to reflect thy love. Our Saviour! Oh, how thou hast loved us! Thou hast become our brother in misery and death, and we do not love thee. And, oh! how we forget that in the manger thou hast wept for us; that on the cross thou hast expired for us. Let us confess, at least, our ingratitude, and begin to feel our shame. We love not the God who loves us, and

who gave up His Son for us. He upholds us in His arms and strengthens us with bread, and we love Him not. He daily turns death away from us, in patient expectation of our love. He gives us His creatures for our service, and we love them more than Him. He sends us His only Son, and we treat Him shamefully. That only Son preferred us to his glory, and left his glory for us—let us confess we love him not. He is born to move our pity with his sorrows—the insinuating, condescending love of God—and yet it searches not our hearts. Come forth of his eternity, and disarrayed of the heavenly hosts, he wanders after us in poverty and want—he wants our love. With naked feet, with head uncovered, save of the assaulting elements, penniless, and without resting-place for that weary head, he seeks in us repose—but we love him not. He is transfigured in glory to attract us, and we regard not his glory. He then comes in meekness and humility, covered with ignominy and blood, all agony and love—and are we yet unmoved? He gives his body, now glorious, to satiate us; his blood, to inebriate us with love—his whole being is a gift of love—and is it possible that it can yet be true that we do not love him? Are we not annihilated? Is there a part of us that shame has not consumed? Let us then confess the truth, and grieve. God is not loved! God is not loved! All things are loved but God, who created love. Heaven is all filled with the mysterious music of love, God is all love, and the saints are all love, and the angels are the messengers of love; and the Son of God came down to bring this fire upon earth, and men continue to crucify Him, so love consumes its eternal ardours within himself unspread. Oh! if you begin to feel these things, then do you begin to love God. And if you will cherish these feelings into desires, then will you grow to love God. For God, seeing this contrition and confusion, will send his Holy Spirit; that Holy Spirit will enlarge your desires, and give you

prayer ; prayer will complete what consideration has begun. As you meditate on these things the fire will kindle ; your desires will collect themselves in one, and rise, and grow, and spread themselves towards God. There is no more sure sign of the presence of grace and love than this greatness of desire. Nor, as St. Bernard remarks, does our Heavenly Father consider what we have been, but what we desire to become. It will only remain to prove your new spirit by your acts. You will sacrifice to God the things that took you from His love ; and you will be generous and bountiful of the things which God has given you. For love is always generous and bountiful. You will shew to God that you love his countenance and his honour more than all his gifts—his countenance you will find in the poor ; his honour in the fervour of his worship.

THE DRUNKARD.

PERHAPS the most curious circumstance connected with the history of the following sermon is the fact, that, previous to its publication, the substance of it was preached, amongst other places, in three different public-houses. Once at Appin, in the county of Cumberland, New South Wales: once at Bathurst, situated beyond the Blue Mountain Range: and once at Patrick's Plains, on the banks of the River Hunter. This was owing to the circumstance of our not having at that period any more appropriate place in which to assemble a congregation on the rare occasions of the visit of a clergyman, and to the great prevalence at that period of the vice which is here assailed. The permanent residence of zealous clergymen in every populous district and the introduction of temperance societies have since, may God be praised for the grace! wrought a marvellous change. In the beautiful and romantic district of Illawarra, the Rev. Mr. Rigney has

inspired the population which is in a great measure Catholic, as effectually with the spirit of temperance as the great man whom he has imitated has succeeded in doing in any part of Ireland; whilst other districts of the colony have not been slow to follow the example. This sermon having been several times reprinted in these countries from the Sydney edition, and the venerable apostle of temperance having deemed it expedient to print a large edition for distribution at his personal cost, besides appending his recommendation to another, I take this opportunity of stating that I can lay no claim to its materials. It is, in great measure, drawn from St. Chrysostom. Hints, thoughts, and illustrations have been drawn from every tome of the magnificent works of this Father for its composition. St. Basil has preached against the same vice with a power as great, and with a vehemence even greater, than St. Chrysostom, both in his homily on the subject, and in another homily on fasting. His language has been copied by St. Ambrose.

In the present edition the writer has introduced a passage he has sometimes used, conceived in that tone of ironic mockery which the prophets have so often used, and in which the Almighty himself so terribly triumphed over and subdued the aspiring pride of our first parent after his disobedience. It is a style which, others failing, he has sometimes found successful in

quelling the proud resistance of the heart against counsel, where, owing to habits of gross vice, it has become callous and impervious to other motives besides that *terror of pride*, calm and rational irony.

THE DRUNKARD.

"He that is temperate shall prolong life."—Eccles. xxxvii. 34.

"Let us cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light: let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness."—St. Paul to the Romans, xiii. 12, and Gal. v.

"Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day come upon you suddenly."—Luke, xxi. 34.

WHAT is a drunkard? A Christian is one who follows and practises the virtues of Christ. An angel is a pure creature that contemplates and enjoys God. A man is a creature that thinks and reasons. A brute is a creature that follows its appetite indeed, but never goes to excesses beyond the bounds of order. What is a drunkard? I have gone through the whole of creation that lives, and I find nothing in it like the drunkard. He enjoys no happiness, like the angels; he is not preparing himself for happiness, like the Christian; he does not think or reason, like a man; he keeps not his appetite within the bounds of nature, like the brute. What then is the drunkard? The drunkard is nothing but the drunkard. There is no other thing in nature to which he can be likened.

This is not a subject on which we can be allowed to soften down the truth in our words until it becomes falsehood.

The drunkard is a self-made wretch, who has depraved, and gratified the depraved cravings of the throat of his body, until he has sunk his soul so far that it is lost in his flesh, and has sunk his very flesh beyond comparison lower than that of the animals which serve him: a self-degraded creature, whose degradation is made manifest to every one but himself; a self-made miserable being, who, whilst he is insensible to his own misery, afflicts every one else with misery around him or belonging to him. He differs from the madman only in this—because the madman has not caused his own calamity, whilst this man has; because the madman is innocent, whilst this man is guilty. The madman is an object for pity, and compassion, and all the cares of humanity; whilst the drunkard is an object of ridicule, scorn, contempt; a butt for the world to play its follies at; a stock for the world's laughter; a ball for its game of mockery; a tool for the knave's cheatery and the harlot's wily; an instrument in the hand of hell's malignity. The madman is placed in security; he can be guarded against injuring himself or others. The drunkard is let loose upon mankind, like some foul, ill-boding, and noxious animal, to pester, torment, and disgust every thing that reasons or feels; whilst the curse of God hangs over his place, and the gates of heaven are closed against him. "Be not deceived," says the apostle; "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor drunkards, shall possess the kingdom of heaven." It is not I, it is St. Paul, who classes the drunkard in such company, and shuts the gates of heaven against him. An outcast! the woes of heaven fall thick and fast upon him. "Who hath woe?" asks Solomon, "whose father hath woe? who hath contentions? who fall into pits? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink up their cups." "Woe to you," says Isaiah, "woe to you that rise up early in the morning to follow drunkenness, and to drink

until the evening to be inflamed. Woe to you that are mighty to drink wine, and are stout men at drunkenness. Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkenness of Ephraim; the drunkenness of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot." Are not these woes written on the face of the drunkard? Are they not heard in all his acts? Knows he what he says, or what he says not? Has not prudence left the guard of his tongue? Is there any gate to his mouth, any bar to his lips? Are not the secrets of the past, and the follies of the present, and fœtid fumes of the liquor, and the foul thoughts from the tempter, mingled together, and poured out upon all around him? The very animal powers sink under drunkenness. It darkens the senses, as well as the soul, and deadens the feelings, as well as the mind; weakens, stupifies, sickens, shatters the frame of the animal man, as well as the frame of the rational man; deprives him of God, deprives him of heaven, deprives him of honour, cuts him off from human respect, casts him away from the friendship of men, destroys his fortune, ruins his family, deprives him of himself, kills all his good here, and all his hope hereafter, and bloats his body with premature disease, to fatten the worms and enrich the rankness of the graveyard.

A Holy Father has described this condition as truly as briefly. "Drunkenness," he says, "is a willing fury, a traitor of thoughts, a ridiculous calamity, a voluntary demon, a state worse than madness." Would you know how the drunkard is worse than the demoniac? We pity the tormented demoniac; we abhor the drunkard. We condole with the one; we are indignant and irritated at the other. The snares of an enemy have possessed the demoniac; his own counsels have possessed the drunkard. With the demoniac he is driven about a slave by his possessor; with the demoniac he is fallen from his state of mind and manhood; with him he staggers, falls, rolls a dis-

gusting eye, foams and exhales nauseousness. He is disagreeable to his friends, ridiculous to his enemies, contemptible to his servants, loathsome to his wife, scandalous to his children—odious to all. Whilst all that call him acquaintance are indignant, and all that call him friend are distressed ; whilst his nearest relations are miserable, and his children are squalid from neglect—wretched, perhaps, from want of care—wicked from example ; the drunkard sits in the house of crime, at the table of infamy, with his cup of weakness—his draught of poison—before him, and is there contending with his brother drunkard which shall most defame himself : which shall shew the greatest folly, which shall exhibit the meanest baseness, which shall best shatter his nerves, and destroy his nature, and abuse and anger their common Lord and Creator.

St. Chrysostom has well described the effects of intemperance—“ Paleness, weakness, laziness, folly.” Pale, hanging cheeks, red ulcered eyes, trembling hands, furious dreams, restless, distracted sleep : like murderers and persons of an affrighted conscience, so broken, so sick, so disorderly are the slumbers of the drunkard who wakes to misery. Shew me a temperate man, and I will shew you a prudent man ; shew me a temperate man, and I will shew you a virtuous man ; shew me a temperate man, and I will shew you a prosperous man ; shew me a temperate man, and I will point out to you a wise man. For intemperance is the root of folly : intemperance is the seed of madness : intemperance is the fountain of uncleanness : intemperance is the well-head of injustice : intemperance is the poison spring of unbelief : intemperance is the stream where each virtue drowns herself : intemperance is the cloud of fleshly vapour which rises over and darkens all the soul. “ Wine,” say the Proverbs, “ is a luxurious thing, and drunkenness, riotousness. Whosoever is delighted therewith shall not be wise.” “ Wine drunken with excess,” says Ecclesiasticus,

“is bitterness to the soul.” “The heat of drunkenness is the stumbling-block of the soul, lessening strength and causing wounds.” Yes, lessening strength. There is an idea abroad that strong drink strengthens. Never was there a more fatal error. All stimulants to excitement, when taken to excess, strengthen at the moment, but leave the body weaker ever after. “Look not then,” says the wise man, “on the liquor when it is yellow; when it sparkleth in the glass, it goeth in pleasantly, but in the end it will bite like a snake, and spread abroad poison like a basilisk.” Like the honey with the sting in it, both go down together. The sweetness soon leaves the palate, but the sting has only commenced its work.

See the drunkard begin, but watch him till he ends his career of intoxication. He has sat at table; he has filled his cups; he has invoked the companions of his guilty joy. His mirth has maddened into riot, then fevered into criminal passion, then lowered into obscene drivel, then sunk into stupor. He has uttered folly, and thought it wisdom; he has profused curses where he should have uttered blessings; he has poured out filth, and mistaken it for wit; the Christian has now left the scene, and human nature is fast following him; reason fades away as folly grows more boisterous; the madness of folly glides off too, and stupidity remains the only companion of drunken insanity. The room reels; the table moves; the man has fallen away, and a beast lies in his place. And even this brute is dead, all but the throat and belly, and these are sickly. Like the banquet of Sisera, it ends with driving a nail through the man’s head. The very infidel, who in old times wrote against Christianity, could say this much of drunkenness—“That it knocks down the man, and nails him to the sensual intermixtures of the body.”

What man loves to be despised? Which of you will endure patiently the contempt of another? And yet every

drunkard crowns his head with mighty scorn. Putting himself beneath the lowest; degrading himself under the meanest. The boys laugh at him, children hoot him, and the criminal scorn him, as he is led home like the cripple, lisping the imperfect noises of an infant, or babbling with a full and spongy tongue, an empty head, a foolish heart. Woe and alas! God of heaven! Dare I appeal to Thee from amidst such a scene! Thy creatures, too! Whither has thy image departed from them? To see a sensible man dishonour himself like the foolish; disgrace his friends like the impious; impoverish his family like the unjust; bring degradation on those who are dearest to him like the heartless, bring reproach on religion like the profane; destroy his body like the murderer, and his soul like the infidel; become an appellation of scorn and a scene of derision to all, and of forgetfulness to himself. Where, O God, is thy image in this man? Where, Divine Lord, are the marks of his baptism? Where, sacred heavens, are the features of your child? And call you yourself still a Christian? And name you yourself yet a man? Where then are the commands of the Gospel? Where the precepts of the Church? Where, even the laws of nature, the ties of humanity, and the instincts of self-preservation?

You have not gone so far, you are perhaps ready to tell me. You have not come to these excesses. Nor are you so abandoned, the heavens forbid, in your excesses. No. But you have made a beginning nevertheless. But you have already gone a certain extent—you feel yourself going further. And where, and when did the drunkard ever stop, and say, “I will go no further,” and did not go further: unless death, in compassion, destroyed him in the flower, before he had ripened into all those fruits which I have described? Drunkenness is a vice which the more it is indulged, the more the palate sickens and languishes, the less the appetite enjoys, from its satiety, the more it craves.

Providence has kindly limited the possible extent of indulging this degrading habit, or it would never stop till it had, as far as possible, turned every thing salutary and healing in nature into the means of self-destruction.

You have not gone to all the excesses which the constitution of your nature will allow of. But you have sown the seeds of those excesses. The habit is already, perhaps, planted within you; it has reached a certain bulk; it is increasing; it is striking its roots deeper and broader; it is entwining its fibres more closely round your heart; you have no effectual will to stop its progress: it will allow of no check unless plucked out altogether: it will of itself make increase—the difficulty of rooting out the habit is weekly greater by its weekly growth. Nothing grows upon human nature like that most abject of its propensities, that most degrading of its habits—drunkenness. And is it not a law of our fallen nature, that the grossest and rankest productions grow most rife and abundant with the least care? If then you have not reached all those excesses, you are in the way to them; and your readiness to excuse yourself is the surest proof that you love the vice; and that, unless arrested in your career, by that cold hand which stops all our vices and brings them to their punishment, you will yet exhibit yourself a spectacle of all those excesses: deprived of the powers of body and mind; a mere living vegetable corruption; your soul dead and entombed within your body, and your body itself with only a few useless organs left to be destroyed. Not in the grave indeed, but still on this side of it, only to infect and afflict every thing near you with wretchedness. And if the drunkard finished in his vice be such a spectacle before man on earth, what must he be to the just made perfect? What, before those angels of light, who look down upon human deeds? What, to the sacred eyes of Him who dying redeemed our wickedness? What, to the all-pervading contemplation of

the omnipotent God? Will He not again at this spectacle be moved inwardly, and repent that He ever made man? And if He does not again send a deluge to destroy him here, will He not reserve him for the deluge of fire, which will not be quenched? "Do not err," says St. Paul, "neither fornicators, nor the servers of idols, nor adulterers, nor the unclean, nor thieves, nor misers, nor drunkards, nor cursers, nor plunderers, shall possess the kingdom of God." Into what a crowd St. Paul casts the drunkard. With the impure, with idolaters, with harlots, with adulterers, with cursers, with misers, with plunderers. What! some proud mind is ready to ask me, is the drunkard one with the impure? Is the drunkard one with the idolater? Do not object, O man! You have heard the Divine laws. Do not interrogate me. Ask the apostle, and he will still answer you, that both are equally shut out from the Kingdom of God. As this then is clear, why need you ask me to take measure of the enormity of your sin? As he stands without the gates, as he is excluded from the possession, as he is lost to salvation, as he is consigned to eternal torments; why need you reach to me the scales and weights to balance and shew the proportion of iniquity between these vices? And why so anxious to ascertain the enormity of drunkenness, separate and alone, when it is never to be found alone, and unaccompanied by some, if not all, this crowd of horrid crimes? Is not drunkenness the fertile mother in whose womb all those vices are engendered? Are they not the accursed offspring of this accursed parent? And shall not the mother-vice carry the curses of her brood? Go to the house of the drunkard. Consider his family. Look at his affairs. Listen to the sounds that proceed from the house of drunkenness, and the house of infamy, as you pass. Survey the insecurity of the public ways and of the night streets. Go to the hospital, to the house of charity, and the bed of wretchedness. Enter the courts of justice, the

prison and the condemned cell. Look at the haggard features of the ironed criminal. Ask all these why they exist to distress you? and you will everywhere be answered by tales and recitals of the effects of drunkenness. And the miseries, and the vices, and the sorrows, and the scenes of suffering, which have harrowed up your soul, were, almost without exception, either prepared by drinking, or were undergone for procuring the means of satisfying this vice, and the vices which spring from it.

Mere intoxication is but the starting-post of the drunkard's course. To what a train of roads does drunkenness point, like some portentous finger-post, erected upon earth by the infernal powers to conduct to their dominions. Drunkenness—dissoluteness, debauchery, disease, the hospital, death. Drunkenness—evil company, cursing, swearing, gambling, profanity, infidelity, death in impenitence. Drunkenness—idleness, carelessness, destruction of property, ruin of family, poverty, destitution, death in abandonment. Drunkenness—riotousness, quarrelling, injuries, insults, inhuman fightings, sudden death. Drunkenness—lawless companions, thefts, robberies, plots, murders, the gaol, the iron gang, the gallows. Drunkenness—weakness, gloominess, wretchedness, melancholy, wild fantasies, black horrors, madness.

These are but a few of the courses of the drunkard. But, whilst the drunkard himself totters or crawls along his destined path to his destined end—without a sense of his shame, or a feeling of his condition, or a regard to his friends, or a thought for his family, or a reflection towards his soul, or one glimpse of his destination—is God silent? Are the heavens without knowledge? Does no eye see? And no hand take note? God is silent, but not inactive. The silence of God is the sinner's worst punishment. He no longer troubles the conscience; He has ceased to warn; He is silent. He contemplates the drunkard's course, patiently collecting His wrath, like smouldering fire, and

His vengeance, like black clouds, into His bosom: why should *He* be in haste? God's time is eternity; and still as the drunkard heaps crimes, God heaps vengeance. Why should *He* hurry? God is all-powerful. What can escape him? The hour comes, and the tempest of God bursts. Why should it be visibly? There are other drunkards to be handled by the same judgment. Hear Himself, speaking by the mouth of Isaias—"I have been silent, I have held my peace, I was patient; my words shall break forth as one in labour, I will scatter them; I will wrap them up together in a whirlpool!"

Have the divine terrors lost their power? What a proof of the hardening and stupifying effects of drunkenness! Your eyes at least are open to the consequences, and you are without excuse. Take in hand then the cup of delusions anew; and with your eyes upon the consequences, however appalling, drink! Why then should you startle? The white bubbles that float on the top of the cup—they are only the tears of your wife. Drink on! You have drained her happiness. Take the gloomy cup anew. Do you begin to hesitate once more? The drops look red—they are only the blood from your starved and neglected children. Drink then, drink on. You have already drained their poor veins to utter impoverishment. Take the horrible cup anew. What, are you more dismayed than before? Yet the vision is true enough, it is only the gray hairs of your parents that float on the surface—you have drained their existence. Drink then, and drink on. But now you must take the cup, for, alas! it is no longer the cup of choice, but the cup of habit; no longer the cup of enjoyment, but the cup of punishment; no longer the cup of sweet delusions, but the cup of necessity. Its pleasures are gone whilst nothing remains but its bitternesses. The cup has lost its charms and the draught its enchantments; from the mere force and necessity of habit you go on

drinking its accumulating compound of miseries. It is thus that at last God punishes the sinner with his sins. For, "in the hand of the Lord is the cup, He passes it from mouth to mouth," sings the Psalmist, "and only its dregs are not annihilated. All the sinners of the earth shall drink of its bitterness."

But the hour is not yet come, though every cup of intoxication hurries it; on goes the drunkard, thoughtless, senseless, despised, to his destruction. Look at that creature; how can I call him man, when he has lost all the qualities of manhood? See him as he staggers on his way; his frame shaken with excess; his head failing, floating heavily on his body, or falling over his side; his squalid appearance; his mouth of folly; his eyes of wild, guilty insanity; his unmeaning look; his incapable fury. He has come from the house of drunkenness. All that can be done for him, for some time to come, is to treat him like a helpless idiot; to put him to his bed, if possible, until he recovers his existence, and a feeling of melancholy, jaded wretchedness of mind and body, which he again seeks to drown and forget in another fit of intoxication; until he at length rounds out his miserable remnant of life, and is dissolved in the grave. Look at that fury. She, once, was a woman; dear to some; beloved by many; amiable to all. See that face, once meek and lovely with the pure beams of innocence, now convulsed with all the diabolical passions which issue from the infernal pit. Hearken to the impure, obscene, ungodly flow of her lips. She, too, has come from the house of drunkenness, and is hastening to the den of infamy; or, like some unnatural monster, is going home to her family to suckle her children with her vices. See that young man. At present, he is honest, useful, thriving; esteemed by his friends, and respected by all who know him. But he is entering the house of drunkenness. He reads his lessons in the school of vice; and every one is

beginning to be uneasy with apprehension ; to look towards his future ; to prophesy his course, and give him over as lost. He begins to suspect himself neglected, then to feel himself disregarded, then to know himself deserted, then abandoned, then shunned ; and he reasons foolishly on the subject, for he has drunk the wine of madness, and abandons himself.

I know of no disorder so difficult of cure as the disease of confirmed drunkenness. Few recover. The vice, become habitual, has eaten away too much of their mind and reason to leave sufficient nerve and vigour for a strong and steadfast resolution. Far be it from me to discourage even those who have gone so deep. There are sufficient examples to shew that they *may* recover, if they *will* but take the means. But I must not dissemble the truth. I would warn the beginner, and those who are tempted to begin. I would entreat them to consider how difficult and rare it is to recover into habits of sobriety after having reached a certain point. Let the beginner draw instruction in time. Let him take to himself thought ; arrest the beginnings ; pluck out the habit whilst its roots are young and green, and shield himself with caution. Let him draw lessons from bad, as well as from good examples. There was a nation of Heathens, the ancient Spartans, who held this vice in such horror, that though they never drank to excess themselves, they intoxicated their slaves, that they might shew their children, by example, to what a condition drunkenness brings our nature. You, alas ! have no occasion for such an expedient. In every street and on every road, men calling themselves Christians will read you this lesson : the land reels with drunkenness. Consider it well and take profit to yourselves. Turn over in your mind the anathemas of the apostle, and the woes of the prophet, until they inscribe themselves in your heart, and the fear of them becomes a portion of your being. Mark them written on

the brow of the drunkard. Watch him in his career, until you see them all accomplished. Write them over your door, inscribe them over your chimney-piece, in your chamber, on your table, in the bottom of every glass; utter them in your devotions; hear them in the sounds of every tavern as you pass; and read them on every sign-board. Better you should pass your whole time in studying the woes of drunkenness, than spend your life in feeling them, and your eternity in suffering for them.

Do you ask me, how you are to break yourself from this degrading habit? The general rule is very simple. Have a willing mind: shun the occasion: fly idleness. Fix for yourself a measure in your friendly domestic meetings, beyond which you are never, whatever be the occasion, to exceed; and never see the inside of a tavern. Be fully assured that you cannot go beyond your measure, however little, on one occasion, without going beyond it always. Consider in what places and with what persons you are most tempted, and avoid them. "Those that love the danger shall perish in it." Let no motive, no wish to appear hospitable, no cruel invitations, no pressings of seeming friendship, induce you to forget the friendship which you owe yourself. Repeat your resolution each morning when you rise, and pray for strength to keep it. Examine how you have kept your engagement each evening when you go to rest. If you have failed once, be not discouraged: try again. Nothing delights the eye of heaven more than to see us wrestling manfully with our infirmities; rising courageously after our falls; drawing humility from our weaknesses, and caution and strength from our humiliation. Only he who gives up in despair is conquered. Renew your resolution—strengthen it with prayer; observe the occasion of your past fall, and remove it. The last advice which I shall give you is one of great importance. Put yourself, with all obedience, under the

guidance of a spiritual director. There is a sort of fascination about this vice which often renders the drunkard powerless for his own deliverance; temptation acts upon him like a charm; he requires the hand of another to free himself from her enchantment. Fly, then, to your pastor. The grace of God will not be wanting. And let the consolations and the blessings of a conscience healed, of health recovered, of character restored, of affairs retrieved, of a family made happy, of friends returning with gladdened hearts, of the revival of life now, and of the future hopes which await your redemption from intemperance, be your encouragement.

THE EVIL TONGUE.

A GENTLEMAN, a zealous member of the Church of England, who for many years held one of the most important situations in the government of New South Wales, suggested to the author the utility which he thought would arise from his publishing a sermon against the vice of prophane swearing, at that period exceedingly prevalent in the colony, to be written in the style of the sermon against drunkenness, which he had previously given to the public, and which that gentleman was in the practice of reading once a fortnight to the convict servants employed on his estate. The following sermon was accordingly written in the year 1836, but an accidental circumstance prevented, at that time, its publication. The reader of the celebrated homilies of St. Chrysostom to the people of Antioch will not fail to perceive how much they have contributed to the substance of the following discourse. The writer gladly takes the advantage of this opportunity of stating how much this, with every other gross vice, has diminished

in New South Wales since the period here described. The descriptions of Australian society given by the writer in his "Catholic Mission in Australasia," and in his evidence before a committee of the House of Commons, the one in the year 1837, the other in the year 1838, however correct at the time, is, he is happy to say, no longer true. The introduction of so many clergymen since that period, the erection of numerous churches, the spread of education, the great inflow of respectable and well-conducted emigrants, and the great moral change wrought amongst the prison population by the influence of religion, have produced one of the most extraordinary changes, for so short a period, that perhaps has ever been witnessed in the history of a people. The abolition, first, of the system of assignment, and now, of transportation to that colony altogether, promises to complete the purification which has been so happily progressing. The devout Catholic will comprehend me more clearly when I inform him that four hundred communicants have been seen approaching the altar of the cathedral in Sydney at one mass upon a festival.

THE EVIL TONGUE.

“ If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man. He is able with a bridle to lead about the whole body. The tongue is indeed a little member and boasteth great things. Behold how small a fire, what a great wood it kindleth ! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is placed among our members, which defileth our whole body. The tongue no man can tame, an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison. By it we bless God and the Father ; and by it we curse men, who are made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be.”—
St. James, ch. iii.

WELL has St. James said that the evil tongue is a fire, and a world of iniquity. A devouring wildfire to spread destruction. A small instrument which works much ruin. A sharp sword, as sings the psalmist, for the slaughter of souls. Nay, a rod to raise up plagues and miracles of mischief. Like the serpent's sting, like the adder's fang, wounding the soul, and spreading through the wound inflaming venoms, corroding poisons, and cruel deaths. It is the creator of a world of evil, infecting and disturbing God's world of good. For is not the evil tongue the creative father of all insincerity, of all unjust dealings, and of all uncharitableness ? Of malice, of deceit, of lies, of perjuries ? Of cursings, of imprecations, blasphemies, obscenities,

foolish talk, and filthy speech? Of backbiting, of detraction, of reviling, of slander, calumny, insult? From these do there not come forth scandals, angry quarrels, inhuman fightings, bitter grudges, persevering enmities; provocations to every crime under heaven, and the destruction of every good name and reputation on earth? Well, then, has the apostle said that the evil tongue is a fire and a world of iniquity. And, in another place, that "He who offends not by his tongue, the same is a perfect man." And again, that "If any man account himself to be religious, and do not bridle his tongue, this man's religion is vain,"—that is to say, it is empty, has no substance, is nothing—the man who bridles not his tongue has no religion.

So now, dear Christians, whilst there is time, judge you yourselves. How many persons can stand the test of this apostolic rule, and prove themselves possessed of religion? Who is ready to say with sincerity—"I never detract my neighbour?" Who, that knows his own heart, and considers the extent of his dealings, can declare—"I never speak evil of, or rashly pronounce judgment upon, my fellow-creature?" Who that is fully prepared to add—"I never publish his weaknesses, or unneedfully spread abroad his failings?" If this be too severe a trial; if it be quite certain that, thus strictly examined, not even one of us can escape the judgment; let us pass over this consideration for the present, however important, and let us take the meaning of the apostle with a wider scope. Who is there, then, whose tongue never violates the truth, and who never thus insults or injures his neighbour? Such a one the apostles declare to be without religion. But even this we will not stop to examine into, however needful the inquiry may be. There is another question to which I will entirely confine myself. And for the answer, alas! I need not search the secret recesses of the heart. The answer is audible, visible, palpable: it forces itself upon our notice at every hour of the day and

of the night; the very airs of heaven are filled with its voices.

How many are there whose tongues, created to bless the name of their Creator, and to say kindly things to their fellow-creatures, are employed in profanely using, rashly swearing by, and even, at times, in blaspheming that most sacred of names, and in imprecating curses and evils upon their fellow-creatures? For that is the man, of all others, of unbridled tongue, who loudly proclaims, not merely to his friends, but to every way-passer, that he has no religion; or, more truly, that he has a religion, of which he is the worthy votary, but that his religion, like himself, is vain. That he has set up an altar within his heart, not to the honour of the glorious God, but to the worship and pomps of Satan.

The ever sacred name of the Almighty and all-present Creator; and that all-sacred name than which there is no other by whose power we can be saved—that tremendous name of victory at whose mention the heavens, the earth, and things infernal are commanded to bow down the knee of adoration; and that of the Eternal Spirit of all sanctity; with all those words that bring heaven to our minds and grace unto our hearts, are familiarly mingled with the names of hell and Satan, amidst anger, mirth, riot, obscenity, and every dissipation of this dissolute land. The great God of the universe is familiarly called down from his throne by a feeble creature, at every word, and turn, and step, that he may bear witness—to what? To a foolish greeting, or a silly thought, or a ribald jest, or an amusing story, or any angry threat, or an unmeaning promise, or to fill up a vacant gap of speech. Those lips which, in the morning, say, “hallowed be thy name,” prove their falsehood for the rest of the day, by abusing that most holy name. That tongue refreshes itself from insulting its Creator by invoking maledictions on fellow-creatures. And

the torrent of this custom has become so broad and strong, that women and even children are swept along in its violence; until the air we breathe is impregnated with impiety; until its sounds strike the Christian ear at every turn like a profane blow; until the purest minds are soiled by its constant intrusion on their sense; and, from the mere habit of walking amidst these unearthly exclamations, grow by degrees indifferent to what is most horrible, like those who live in a city empested with the plague. Meanings so deadly, so satanical, in tones so unchristian and inhuman, so often ringing on the tongues of men, that, were some blessed angel but to listen to us for the first time from within his circle of joys, that heavenly spirit must think that he heard, not the language of the children of God's earth, but the voices of those reprobates whose dwelling lies beyond the reach of every ray of hope. Earth is pictured to the ear like the infernal regions, and that too by men who aspire to call God their Father, and Christ their Redeemer, and themselves Christians, and every fellow-man a brother. Oh, blindness! Oh, folly and contradiction! For what else, profane men, can I invoke? or what else will answer my call? A child of God ill-treating the name of his Heavenly Father! A follower of Christ cursing that very brother to save whom from perdition Christ died! A heart boasting of its goodness with a mouth full of maledictions! A Christian with a language of profane oaths! A virtuous father, and a good mother, correcting their children dutifully with the rod of the tongue soaked in imprecations and curses! Oh, absurdity! Hell may laugh at the folly of these things, but the angels and good men weep. What can I call to my aid? For our natural reason has nothing to say to this conduct, still less has inspired faith. You have not here even the wretched motive of self-interest for your excuse, nor the provocation of any natural appetite for your defence. This profane

practice neither fills your hands with ill-gotten gains, like injustice ; nor procures you an undeserved respect, like the veil of hypocrisy ; nor gratifies you with any passing excitement, like the folly of drunkenness ; nor sates some animal sense, like that vile impurity ; nor amuses you with any dream of your own importance, like the swelling of pride ; nor supplies any craving want of the depraved portions of your nature. It is the merest unmixed vice and premeditated irreligion. And this at once decides its enormity. For from what do we measure the enormity of a crime ? Is it not from the sacredness of the person it directly attacks ; from the character of the person who commits the injury ; from the spirit in which the evil is done ; from the greater or less provocation to the criminal on the part of the person injured ; and from the degree of deliberation with which the offence is committed ? But the persons immediately insulted are the persons of the adorable Trinity. Our Fatherly Creator, and that adorable Son who loves us, and is exposed unto these insults, because he died to give us life. Or if the Eternal is not insulted in his own Majesty, because he is patient to endure us, he is offended in those holy spirits, and those blessed saints, who stand before his throne ; or he is insulted in those, his children, made to his likeness, who represent him here on earth. The person who commits the insult is not a pagan, a Mahometan, or an infidel, not even an Israelite ; but that favoured child of God, a Christian. If the pagans were profane towards their deities, they had excuse,—their gods were themselves profane. They did but insult the creature of their imagination and the work of their hands. The Jews, with all their obduracy, held in profound respect the eternal name. In such sacredness did they hold that tremendous name, that they never pronounced it even on solemn occasions. If it was necessary to be written on any occasion, the ink that wrote that adorable name could

be applied to no other purpose, the very pen employed must be purified before and after this solemn act, for such they esteemed it, in order to shew more perfectly their reverence for that incommunicable, that dread eternal name. No. This profanation, in all its horror, is reserved for men and times that boast their freedom from the blindness of paganism and the imperfections of Judaism, that they have the full light of Christianity for their guidance and consolation, and the perfect law of charity to animate their actions. As to the manner and spirit of the insult, it cannot possibly be more aggravated. Let us suppose that you have a child, or let it be a servant, who is incessantly calling you to his presence to witness the truth of every folly that falls from his mouth. Let us suppose, again, that there is some one who, having received great favours from you, makes no better return for them than, wherever he goes about, to repeat your name with disrespect. Let us further suppose that some friend of yours, whom you have long served and obliged, has so far made himself your enemy, without cause or provocation, that he is incessantly hurling curses and wishes for evil upon the members of your family. Add to all this inconceivable conduct, that there is some low-minded wretch, of whom you have been the making, though you could never make him grateful, who, abusing your confidence, is incessantly assuming your power and authority, and, with all the tyranny and injustice of usurpation, is continually exercising this your power and authority to work the misery of your dependents. Profane-mouthed Christian, thou art the man! In the place of your child, of your servant, of your ungrateful friend, of your enemy, of your worthless dependent, put yourself; and in the place of yourself, put your God.

When we are drawn into sin by the allurements of appetite, or when we are aroused to its commission by the irritations of passion, there is so far at least excuse, that no

cold malice is expressed ; when a sin is committed with a view to some temporal interest, there is at least an object, however unworthy, to which to sacrifice the soul. But this is a crime which is adopted deliberately, which is adopted with effort, and for no other object but the pure love of the sin itself. It is a fine thing, so you think, to shew a strength of mind that braves heaven and hell. Tell me not, that it is only a *habit* ; that you do not *think* of it ; that you do not *mean* it ; that you only do so in your *anger* ; and that *others* do it as well as yourself. Are these, then, your best motives for offering an insult unto God himself ? O shame and grief ! But what right have I to expect a becoming silence or a just self-condemnation from a mouth so profane and indiscreet even before God ? Urge me not, at least, with such reasons as only increase your criminality and add weight to your condemnation. You curse and swear, and profane your mouth from habit ? And who gave you that habit ? How was it formed, and who formed it within you ? Do you recollect the difficulty you had to begin ; with what touches of remorse, with what effort after effort against the checks of conscience, you first struggled on and gradually wore yourself into that habit ? Is your crime become less now, simply because length of practice has made your heart the harder ? Is it less, because you commit the crime more easily ? Is it less, because you are guilty more frequently ? If you now commit the sin with less deliberation and reflection, did you not deliberately lay the causes why you should commit it with less of consideration ? If you do not think of it, is it not an additional crime that you neglect to think of it ? Is it not an additional proof that you insult your Divine Creator, and offend against your fellow-creatures without a motive ? And if you do not mean what you say, does it not make every such rash oath and imprecation to be a falsehood and a perjury ? And if some assert that they only commit this sin in anger,

is this sin lessened by being added to another sin, and by provoking the commission of that sin? Cursing and swearing are the fuel of anger: keep them away, and its flame will expire. These habits are the very nurses of anger. Say not, then, that you *only* do so in anger; but that you do so and kindle anger; that you do so and feed the flame of anger; that you do so and arouse anger, when anger would willingly sleep. But you only do what many others do. Yes; and, therefore, the more your Creator is insulted and abused, and the more his creatures are reviled and degraded, the more they are to be abused, insulted, reviled, and degraded. The wider the evil is spread, it is the less to be abhorred, detested, and shunned. Oh Christians! beware of the reasonings of crime. Nothing ever came of them but evils and contradictions. These various excuses have only tended to shew you the extent of your delusions, and how much farther you had carried the evil than you imagined. Add again to all this the manifold cause of sin in your neighbour; and, above all, that scandal of the little ones of Christ. "He," says our Divine Redeemer, "who scandalizes any of these little ones who believe in me, it were better that a millstone were tied about his neck, and that he were sunk into the sea." What, then, shall I say of those fathers, what, if I am compelled to add, of those mothers even, who, both by conduct and example, are educating their children in this diabolical habit? Better had those children never seen the light than be born of such parents. It were a blessing for those children to be deprived of such parents. Do you shudder at hearing such ideas? Why then compel me to utter them? It is not these sentiments, but the conduct of these parents, that should excite you to horror. On them turn all your horror. Those parents, through whom God would reveal himself to those children; those parents, who hold in a manner the authority of God over their offspring; those parents, who were destined by

God to the sublime duty of guiding their first young opening thoughts to piety, to nourish them in holiness, and, like a visible providence, to guard and protect that innocence, which, once lost, is never recovered: those parents cradle the infant amidst iniquity, they nurse the poor innocent at the bosom of profanity, and feed the young and tender soul with the poison of ungodly lips. But the crimes of those children from the cradle to the grave are the crimes of their parents; the blood of their children will be upon their heads, and their souls will be required at their hands. And what a monument have they left upon earth, when, as they lie beneath its surface in their graves, their sons shall say, "I was taught this vice by my father;" and their daughters, "I learned these evil words from the lips of my mother." Never can I forget the short but melancholy history which a transported criminal, who had been thus taught in early youth, once gave of his life, to one who sought to console him on arrival at his destination. "In early youth," so he said, "I cursed my father, and I have ever since been the victim of misfortune. No sooner, after long pursuit, did I seem to be touching some prosperity, but it changed to adversity. That curse was always upon me. And now I am here, doomed to misery for life. May God have mercy on me!"

This profane and impious custom, seasoned as it commonly is with obscenity, spreads its scandals in every direction, until, from the atmosphere of infection it creates, the minds even of the innocent almost cease to be pure, despite of their good-will. Oh! my brethren, you who have any love of God left, any respect for our holy religion, any regard for yourselves, shun those men of ungodly lips; fly them as you would a pestilence, let neither man nor God behold you in their presence. "Their throat," says the Scripture, "is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they act deceitfully, the venom of asps is under their lips."

They are compared to the sepulchre from which issues nothing but death, and to the aspic from which issues nothing but poison. Wherefore this dreadful description? Because, continues the psalmist, "their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness—destruction and unhappiness is in their ways, there is no fear of God before their eyes." This passage is not wanting in terror, but there is another that should cause every profane mouth to hesitate.—"As a bird flying to other places, and as a sparrow going hither and thither, so a curse uttered without cause shall come back upon a man." That is, it shall not injure the person who is cursed, but shall recoil upon the curser. And, again, is it said, that "While the ungodly curseth the devil, he curseth his own soul." The judgment of God upon this guilt is terrible. "He loved cursing, and it shall come upon him: he would not have blessing, and it shall be far from him: he put on cursing like a garment, and it went in like water into his entrails, and like oil into his bones. May it be unto him like a garment which covereth him, and like a girdle with which he is continually girt." I know of nothing more terrible in sacred Scripture than this declaration of God upon the man who is given to cursing. The cursing of man, so far as the injury of another is concerned, is a vain, a fond, and a useless thing; but it brings upon him who is guilty of it the curse of God, which pervades his inward soul like oil, and covers his outward flesh like a garment. Now what is the curse of God? Let us listen with profound attention and reverence. The blessing of God makes all the seeds of good to grow within us, and to gather increase under the sacred influence of His Spirit. The cursing of God withdraws the elements of good, and leaves but the germs of evil and corruption, to grow up and spread unchecked beneath the influence of the spirit of evil. And hence in another place is it said, that, "the labour of their lips shall cover them,

burning coals shall be upon them, in their miseries shall they have no power to stand." And once more, the Spirit of God declares, that "a man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and that the scourge shall not depart from his house." After such an exposition of the nature and consequences of this crime from the mouth of the Eternal himself, who but must feel with Ecclesiasticus, that "the speech that sweareth much shall make the hair of the head to stand upright, and its irreverence shall make one stop his ears."

A rash oath will prompt a man to enormities to which his own evil nature would never lead him. David in the heat of youth made a rash oath, and it was only the interposition of Divine Providence that saved him from fulfilling it, by imbruing his hand in the blood of the whole household of Nabal. Saul made a rash oath, and his son Jonathan, though innocent of any crime, must in consequence have died, had not the oaths of the people interfered to deliver him from his father's hand. Jepthe made a rash and inconsiderate vow, and his virgin daughter became its victim; it has been even thought that she was immolated in sacrifice by her father, and that her pure blood reeked up to heaven to bear witness against rash vows and prayers. The daughter of Herodias came in and danced before Herod and the guests of his banquet; and Herod, in the heat and madness of the hour of festivity, swore that he would give her whatever she asked of him, were it even half his kingdom. And when the horrid demand reached his ears, fearing and trembling, yet, on account of his oath, and for very shame of the guests who had witnessed his swearing, he sends out the command, and the startled guests shrink back chilled with horror at the sight which is brought on the festive table—the bleeding head of the holiest of men cut off by a rash oath. What vice so calculated to make a man bold and daring

before God, at the very time that he is playing the mean and pitiful coward before the face of his fellow-man? You have said it, you have threatened, you have sworn; men like yourselves have heard the oath; the thing is wicked; you have called God on the one side to witness, and the devil on the other to help, what signifies the misgiving that arises as your spirit begins to cool; men will sneer and laugh, and that is terrible to a man without soul; so, fearing the face of man, and hiding his thoughts, as he thinks, or if he cannot, boldly daring before the sight of God, he throws himself into his crime. Such is the natural tendency of a habit for which language gives us no name sufficiently strong to mark our detestation.

But on more solemn occasions you would not rashly or falsely swear. For my part, I can see no difference between those solemn occasions once or twice in a life, and the rashly and falsely swearing on every occasion, except that the every-day crime is the offence the most heinously and grievously aggravated, so far as the sinner himself is concerned; it being committed not only constantly, but scandalously and without any the least degree of compensating motive. Do you think that those who swear rashly and falsely every hour of the day will feel much difficulty in falsely swearing in an hour of peculiar solemnity? The sense of religion, the check of conscience, the spirit of reverence, the feeling of veneration for that sacred name, is already gone. The profane swearer has laboriously schooled himself in perjury.

And can that unhallowed tongue, think you, be ever taught the praises of its Creator? Can its voice be prepared to call with sincerity upon his name in the last stages of mortal extremity? And when this life is shortly done, can such polluted lips speak the language of heaven? Is not that voice now practising the language it is to speak for eternity? Can you lay claim to that heavenly country,

who speak not her language? Will not the regions of darkness lay claim to you by the very fact of your speaking their peculiar tongue? Can we suppose, when we hear you so zealously emulating the joyless speech of imprecating and blaspheming demons, that you are destined to sing with cherubim and seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!" Or with the heavenly saints to proclaim "To the one God, immortal and invisible, all honour and glory!" Or to cast down your golden crowns before the eternal throne, and with the elders to exclaim, "Glory, honour, benediction, and salvation, for ever to our God!"

If, then, you would avoid the full and clear certainty of being claimed by those regions of darkness; if you would have a ray of hope left you towards that heavenly country, change your language. Let those lips that curse learn to bless. Let that sacrilegious tongue learn reverence and praise. With the devout king of Israel, pray that God would put a door of discretion to your mouth, and a guard of circumspection about your lips. Guard that mouth yourself by a strong resolution and a cautious watchfulness. Let it not be said any more, to your shame, that your soul is vanquished by your tongue. Let each one offer up to God the solemn resolution not to suffer his omnipotent name to be profaned either by yourself or by another. Check it in your servants; be not afraid of expressing your disapprobation of it in your friends. If you would not sit at a table and hear the name of your earthly father reviled, neither endure the company of those who revile the name of your Father who is in heaven. Let your religion declare itself through the purity of your tongue. Begin from this moment. A few days of careful watchfulness, and the difficulty is past. Impose a prayer upon yourself whenever you so far forget your resolution, and

you will not forget so easily again. Carry away what I have said in your breast, and add to it from your own reflections. Call in your imagination to give a help to your memory. Carry in your hand as you go away to your homes the bleeding head of John the Baptist. Retire to your private room, place it there on your table before you, and that bleeding head will converse with you most feelingly on the wickedness and danger of rash and profane swearing. That austere and innocent countenance, so radiant of devotion, is now pale, ghastly, deathly, streaked over with clotted gore; those eyes, which beamed so mild a light, inspiring awe, conversion, and peace, are now extinct; and whilst the tangled hair is defiled about the neck, as still it shrinks and palpitates from the death-stroke, and the tepid blood flows on the floor; ask of those black swollen lips the cause of the calamity, and they will answer you—"It was a rash oath. I rebuked the tyrant, and he feared me; I charged him with his adultery, and he respected me; he profaned his mouth with an oath, and all this came upon me." From this conversation, turn your mind to the scene of Calvary. See that God-man nailed to that ignominious tree. Hear the curses, the oaths, and imprecations of the rabble around him; enter into the heart of the Son of God, and mark how he in spirit sees assembled there the whole race of the profane-tongued, until it grows beneath his sight a sea of mocking heads; and remember that, what grieves the divine Redeemer of men most is to see you, his children, join the throng and mingle your oaths and curses with those of the profane multitude. And then ask yourselves, whether you can have the heart to dishonour His name, to degrade that of his heavenly Father, to disgrace the religion born of his blood, to insult his members with uncharitable lips, to kill his little ones with the scandal of your mouth, whilst you

bring on your own soul damnation? Resolve, and resolve again, watch, struggle, call on heaven for help, have a hearty good-will to conquer. Remember that to him who overcomes Christ has promised the white robe, and the hidden manna, and the new name expressive of new and mysterious things, and a seat with His Father in the kingdom of heaven.

THE SINNER'S DELAY.

THE Fathers of the church from whose writings our modern preachers, the French especially, have drawn the greater part of the materials for the composition of their sermons against delay of repentance, are Tertullian, St. Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, and Salvian. The close and powerful thoughts of Tertullian, embodied in his treatise *De Penitentiâ*, have been expounded and repeated by all who have treated the subject after him. St. Ambrose drew large portions of his treatise on the same subject from Tertullian, to which he has added, as usual, his own beautiful amplifications. The numerous homilies preached by St. Chrysostom on repentance, his exhortations to the fallen Theodore, and the thoughts and appeals on the subject so numerous scattered over his commentaries on the sacred Scriptures, have furnished inexhaustible materials to the preacher, which have been freely used in the composition of modern sermons.

Bossuet, even to a greater extent than other

preachers, has transferred whole passages from the Fathers into his sermons without observing the formalities of quotation. Where a maxim, an illustration, a forcible sentence or expression, will derive additional force from the authority of its author, they introduce his name. To do this on every occasion would not only interrupt the flow of the discourse and divert the attention of the audience, but would break the unity of the argument and the force and energy of the appeal. The long and eloquent peroration of the famous sermon on delay of repentance, by Massillon, is but an expansion of one of the most striking passages in the eloquent declamation of Salvian *against avarice*; whilst the germ of the passage of Salvian seems to have been borrowed from St. Augustine.

THE SINNER'S DELAY.

“Thy arrows are fastened in me; thy hand has been strong upon me. There is no health in my flesh because of thy wrath; there is no peace in my bones because of my sins. For my iniquities are gone over my head; and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me. My sores are putrefied and corrupted because of my foolishness. I am become miserable and bowed down even to the end: I walked sorrowful all the day long.”—
 Ps. xxxviii.

How heavily and sadly move the tones of this psalm! It is the voice of the sinner awakening from his dream and complaining unto God. A ray of the divine grace has penetrated through the delusions of the flesh, and piercing the turbid regions of his heart, has touched the soul, and he begins to know his misery. It is the voice of self-accusing. “My sins have come over my head, my soul is troubled exceedingly. I am corrupted because I have been foolish; and my soul is withered up because I forgot to eat my bread.” It is an eternal decree—there is no life without God. It is a truth as unlimited, that there is no peace without the friendship of God, and no rest provided for the sinner. The sinner has resolved to make himself happy without God; but however he may aspire to the treason, he cannot become a god unto himself, and the God of heaven

will be with him. There is no living without God. If we are unwilling to possess Him with peace, He will possess us with trouble. If the soul will not entertain the divine presence within her, she must feel the weight of the divine presence upon her. "Thy hand, O Lord, has been heavy upon me. I had no rest for my bones : I had no peace in my heart." The arrows of thine anger have pierced me, O Lord ; I turned this way and that in my anguish, but as I turned not to thee, the only deliverer, the more I strove for escape the more deeply the stings of remorse were fastened. There is no escaping from God. With His blessed presence He cheers the devout, but He lays his heavy hand upon the sinner. His light may have departed, the eye of the soul may have grown dim and false, but a heavy sense of the eternal presence lies oppressively upon the heart, even as it chains and holds in bondage the spirits of the condemned. Therefore does the sinner walk in sorrow all the day, and his troubles lie down with him in the night : the nightly visions of his head give him trouble in his dreams ; and whilst he lies buried in sleep, his troubles rest silently by his bed prepared to meet him again as he awakes. The memory of former days but whets the tooth of remorse—keen, gnawing, and consuming remorse—remorse, the interior life of the condemned—remorse without repentance. Oh, who can escape from God ? Jonas strives in vain to take flight from before his face—the earth refuses him a retreat. He hurries to the sea—the very sea denies him a grave ; all nature refuses to shelter him from God. God creates a monster to receive him, until, within the living cavern shut up alone with God, the prey of his remorse, he turns at length to acknowledge his merciful afflictor, and finds deliverance and peace. And as the sinner cannot escape from God, so neither can he deprive the just man of the consolation of the divine presence. Daniel refuses to abandon God ; he is cast into the seven-

fold heated furnace; but in the midst of the fiery flames the Lord is visibly with him, he walks untouched and refreshed amidst the fires, whilst he exalts and praises his deliverer. Seven times a day the prophet openly worships God: the enemies of God forbid this holy converse; again the devout prophet shews his fidelity to the divine presence. God descends with his servant into the lions' den, and is safe and untouched, for God is with him. As our friend or as our enemy, God is ever with us. If as our friend, what enemy need we fear? for "He will be the enemy of our enemies, and will afflict those who afflict us." But if we make the Almighty our enemy, from what enemy can we escape? He will not oppose them, and "the enemy will grow strong and multiply, they will bring down our life to the earth; they will make us to dwell in darkness like those who are long since dead." The memory of days of old, when you enjoyed the gifts of God—when you meditated on all his works—when you walked in the light of his presence, and raised your hands to him—that memory of things now no more rounds the burden of sadness and trouble. Restless and discontented and self-condemned; longing for a change, and yet unwilling to begin; embracing the sin which preys upon you; desirous to quit it, yet afraid to take courage; loving your misery by fits, and then, by fits, hating that very affection; sick of your faintheartedness and weary of your weakness of resolution—such is the history of the sinner who delays his conversion, a state of remorse without repentance, and a state of death without release.

Faithful souls, and laborious, peaceful-hearted penitents, you want not consolation, nor the word which gives life. Cherish the sacred light that is within you. Cultivate the divine grace to the utmost in your peaceful fervor. But I must, after the example of my divine and blessed Master, go wandering in search of the lost and fallen. Join me then devoutly with your prayers whilst I go sorrowing in search

of the dead. Perhaps the word of grace may second our efforts, and penetrating those fleshy tombs, the soul that is dead within may hear its voice and live. What shall recal the spirit of life? And who, in the meanwhile, can sufficiently deplore the fall of souls opposed to God? This is no temporal calamity, no limited grief. This is not the starvation of the body, but the impoverishment of the heart; not the sorrowful separation of relations and friends, but the cruel divisions of the spirit; not the ill-treatment of parents from their children, but our Heavenly Father ill-treated and despised; not the just oppressed by the unrighteous, but the soul abandoned of God and delivered over to her enemy. What other calamity is like unto this? The patriarch of affliction was stripped of his possessions, destruction rushed upon him like a tempest, and his seven children, the dear ones, were dead in the same hour: his body was stricken from head to foot, and, retiring upon his dunghill, his last possession, he endured the reproaches of his friends, and cleansed his sores with potsherd. The prophet of sorrow saw Jerusalem ransacked, her children dragged into captivity, the temple of God in ruins, and its fragments covering the ground, and he sat on a stone refusing consolation, and for many days poured out his lamentations. But here is an affliction more vast than that of the patriarch of affliction, for the soul of Job was untouched; and a sorrow more profound than that of the prophet of sorrow, for Jeremias foresaw the deliverance of Israel and the glory of God repaired. It is no bodily captivity, no temporal death, no earthly ruin that we deplore; but the captivity, the ruin and death of immortal souls. Were it the death of the body only, I could be consoled, I could perform the sacred rites over the grave, I could offer holy sacrifice on their behalf in the hope of bringing them relief. But the soul is dead—dead and loathsome as the corpse that lies corrupting in the grave.

Alas ! you were once the living temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelt in you ; and not, like that material temple, were you merely graced with the presence of an ark and cherubim, and the propitiatory, but Christ, and the Father, with the Holy Spirit, dwelt therein. It was not the manna of the desert and that hard law engraved on stone which were there deposited ; but living bread from heaven reposed within you, giving life ; and the law lived in your heart—the perfect law of liberty and love—whilst all within your soul was light and peace. As a sanctuary were you adorned with purple and with white ; for, in your baptism, innocent purity gave you her white robe, and you promised to keep it for ever unstained before the sight of God, and you were all purpled with the royal blood of Jesus—a living temple, purified and consecrated with solemn rites and vows to God ; mysteriously built and prepared without hands to receive the eternal presence. But, now !—the living temple is desecrated, the white robe is defiled, the royal blood of Jesus is scattered beneath your feet, the Lord of the cherubim has departed with his hosts, the chosen sanctuary of God is a ruin, all her gates are desolate, her glories gone. Serpents and noxious things defile with their presence the ruined sanctuary of God—those noxious things, the passions, with their venomous fires. The spirit of evil reclaims his former reign, and taking seven spirits worse than himself, has entered in and taken possession—the spirit of pride, the spirit of sloth, the spirit of envy, the spirit of uncleanness, the spirit of anger, the spirit of impiety, and the spirit of revenge. In vain does the sinner affect to recognize the association of but one or two of these spirits of evil. Let him know, then, that one of these spirits is never to be found alone without the companionship of the rest ; they may lie hidden for the present, but they will shew themselves with the occasion. “ He who offends in one is guilty of all,” is the doctrine of an apostle. For he has surren-

dered himself up to that first spirit, the spirit of pride opposed to God, which is the parent and producer of every vice. And daily will that spirit of evil multiply his strength; daily will God further withdraw from his once living sanctuary; daily will the chains of irresolution add length to their links and bind you more irrevocably to the enemy; daily will the heart lose some last portion of the remnants of her good desires; daily will you grow less sensible to your condition as that condition grows more calamitous. For the indulgence of sin is such an opium draught to the spirit; it causes, as St. Chrysostom remarks, such an intoxication to the soul, that, hurried away through the delirium of the senses, elated and swollen with the dream of pride, when these have passed—how quickly they pass!—we fall within ourselves, so stupified and so blinded with the mist that exhales from our self-love, that we remain not only insensible to our real condition, but to all the frightful consequences that await us in the future. We become, observes the same Father, like one in the dark, and are no longer capable of making the proper distinctions between things which are most precious and the things most vile, between things the most salutary and the things most noxious. It is only when, through prayer and repentance co-operating with the mercy of God, our pride begins to depart, that we have sufficient light to comprehend the blindness and desolation to which the soul had been reduced.

Shall the sinner, then, be permitted to plead this ignorance as an excuse? He is indeed blind to the enjoyment of loving God, he is insensible to the blessings of peace, nor does he see the extent of his calamity; but he is not ignorant of his sin, nor has God left the sinful soul without his testimony. If you have not His love, if He has withdrawn much of His light, there still remains within you the unquenchable dread of his terrors, and a weary sense of self-misery. Still does He cause His sun to rise over you, and

send you hourly blessings ; still does His goodness follow you, and, solicitous for your conversion, He from time to time disturbs you with the keen sense of your distresses, presses your spirit with importunate mercies, touches your soul with rays of light, which awaken your recollection of the good you have abandoned, and raise your sorrow over yourself. But new acts of infidelity repel these divine visitations, which, were they faithfully followed, would deliver you from your blindness. And there are solemn hours which come to every sinful soul, when the divine mercy is manifested to her in great light ; but the generous and forgiving Lord is treated ungenerously, the hour of his visitation is allowed to pass, the gift remains unfruitful, and the hand of the divine giver is withdrawn. What, in the meanwhile, have you done ? You have raised up anew in your heart the demon whom God had crushed, and have given him a victory. Once was he overthrown and expelled ; again was he in danger of losing dominion over you, and again you have bowed yourself down to become his slave—despite of every remonstrance, you have given him an insolent triumph over Jesus Christ. Is not this, so far as your inclinations are concerned, to sacrifice God to his adversary ? After having thus belonged first to God, then to his enemy, after having been the servant of God and of Satan alternately, you come to the conclusion at last, that you find no such difference between their services, but that, indeed, you rather prefer the service of his rival and enemy to that of Christ himself. First you make a show of your desire of satisfying God for your sins by repentance ; and then, repenting of that very repentance, at the expense of God and of His grace, you make atonement and satisfaction to the devil. What, then, have you no sense of your misery ? no conviction of your immortality ? no dread of your eternity ? Wrecked, and sinking into that boundless ocean, the divine hand puts forth the plank of repentance, and, in

obstinate desperation, we repel the boon of safety, and toil on to our dark perdition. Faithful souls and devout lovers of Jesus Christ, bear me witness, and tell me if ever you knew an enemy so treat his enemy as these Christians are cruelly treating themselves. Persecution and stripes may assail the body, but they cannot touch the soul; banishment and chains constrain the mortal part, but the soul they leave free; whilst these Christians exile their very souls to chains, imprisonment, and an eternal desolation. The worst of enemies, however implacable and deadly be his fury, can reach but the body, whilst these Christians deliver up their very souls to death, and that death eternal. The hatred of an enemy expires with his victim, but you pursue your very selves with enmity beyond the grave.

And yet there is not a sinner within these walls who does not intend to convert himself to God before he dies, and who does not build a sort of hope upon this very intention. But *not now*, he determines—*not just yet*. I know not, my brethren, what you may think of these promises for some future, indefinite time; to me they appear like the very seal of condemnation. Did these sinners fancy, in their ignorance, that heaven has no joys and hell no terrors; did they think their present miserable condition as desirable as the peace of God and His consolations, then, indeed, they might go on deferring to some future time, which may come or not, with some degree of consistency; then their ignorance would be a proper cloak for the vileness of their sentiments. But by this promise, this hope, this desire for the future, absurdly as it contradicts their present conduct, they pass a sentence upon themselves, which the Almighty, in his truth and his justice, must of necessity confirm; they leave themselves without a shadow of defence, however rigorously they may be dealt with; they pronounce self-condemnation on the entire of their conduct; and yet do they go perseveringly on, in the very face of their conscience, and of the

clear and incontrovertible judgment of their own souls. Strange and incredible infatuation! The grace of God is generously offered, the Son of God affectionately presents himself, bearing pardon and the price of their redemption—that inestimable gift he has bought with blood—and the sinner exclaims:—“Wait awhile! I am not ready! Stop till I have done with iniquity! Some other time!” And thus, oh God! thy patient mercy is abused. Thus, divine Redeemer! thy pains and sorrows are set at nought. Thus thy love is requited; Spirit of grace! And is it thus that man in his conduct dares to treat God? O sinner! And is it thus you rush on blindly to your destruction? What are you doing? God is withdrawing farther from you whilst you think he is coming nearer to importune you anew to repentance. The heavens are black over your head whilst you think that all is calm and serene. The gulf is opening beneath your feet whilst you dream that all is firm and secure. The chariot of vengeance is approaching, driven by wrath and indignation; and you hear not the screeching of its fiery wheels. Hell spreads wide his horrid jaws in readiness to devour—what frightful varieties of torment! Everywhere the busy demons of vengeance in what seem, through the thick and stifling darkness, to be caverns, and lakes, and troubled mountains, which are all alive with agony. Remorse—there is rending remorse, with his restless crew of crimes; fires, that consume but never die; chains, that grow about the spirit; irons, that enter the very soul; worms, that slowly gnaw the unconsumed heart; serpents, that are in no hurry over a prey which can never escape them; dark and anxious spirits, that are restlessly looking for the coming of the victims whom on this earth they have tempted and prepared. Death is coming. Silently, but swiftly and certainly he is on his way. His steps tread on the minutes of your life, and already he has marked the last. And do we still hear the persevering cry

of "not yet," and "a little longer?" "I dare confidently affirm," exclaims St. Augustine, "that more souls perish by this stratagem of the enemy than by all his other deceits put together." Yes: well does the subtle enemy understand the meaning of those words, *a little longer; a little longer delay*. Well does he know the accidents and chances that fall out; how he that is not fit to-day, is less fit to-morrow; how grace leaves the soul, and leaves her helpless; how one sin draws on another; how impunity after impunity piles presumption upon presumption; how the resolution weakens as the force of habit strengthens; how growing pride increases the darkness of the soul; and how the appetites increase with their indulgence; how the senses become more corrupt, and the passions burn intenser from delay. Yes: still does he continue to whisper in your ear those dangerous words—*a little longer; a little longer delay*. Too well does he know the power of time to wear away the last fibres of resolution; to eat up the last remnants of good-will; to destroy the very last inklings of desire to change, and to bind you in such bonds of sloth as will secure you irrevocably his. Well does he know that these words—*a little longer, a little longer*, mean *never, never*.

What makes the sinner abominable in the sight of God, observes St. Chrysostom, is not so much the sin he has committed as the perseverance in sin. What leaves him without remedy is this perseverance in sin. Fall we may through weakness and through frailty, and He who knows the clay of which He made us, knows also how to shew mercy and to forgive; but when we go on persevering in our sins, they cease to be the mere acts of frailty, and change into a habit of blind-hearted obstinacy and proud-spirited malice, which make our sins resemble in their character the unpardonable sins of demons. It is this which changes the sins of human frailty into crimes of a hope-

less kind, this unwillingness to arise again after we have fallen.

But at some future time you will arise again more easily, you are willing to imagine. What sure prophet is it that has promised you either another time, or another grace, or a better disposition than you have at this moment? Yes, the case is perfectly intelligible to every one but yourself. Again is the tempter at the ear of your soul, whispering another change upon those fearful words—*a little longer, a little longer*. And so you are of this decided opinion, that if you go on persevering as you have done, and piling one act upon another, one sin upon another, one danger upon another, and one evil habit upon another, until you can bear no more, and the load of accumulated evil, misery, and injustice to God, is about to crush you for ever, you will then be able to throw the whole from you, and to purify yourself from its defilement with greater ease than at the present moment. But you are just at present in the midst of so many difficulties! Suffer me, in all kindness and sorrowing compassion, to ask you, why then will you go on adding still greater difficulties to their number? If you find yourself surrounded with outward trials, ah! why will you not free yourself from your inward troubles, that you may not be left without a consolation and a support? The more your temporal distresses press upon you, the more cause have you to free yourself from such as are in their nature eternal. Bring back the peace of Christ within your heart, and he will give you strength to bear your afflictions, perhaps wisdom to overcome them, certainly grace to turn them to profit. See you not in your afflictions the chastening hand of our heavenly Father? He would kindly force you from your delusions. He would lovingly force you back unto Himself—the God of all consolation. Whilst he mercifully destroys the pleasures you have sought in sin, He reminds you of his words—“Call

on me in the day of distress, and I will deliver you." And most lovingly does the Son of God invite you to rest yourself upon him for support in your troubles. "Come to me, all you that labour and are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you, and you shall find rest for your souls." The trials of life must be endured; we cannot annihilate them at will; but to unaided nature they are insupportable, whilst to grace they become light, easy, and even precious. The just man retires from his outward troubles to his inward consolations; but he who can only fly from one trouble to another, from troubles without to sadder troubles within the soul, such a one is indeed unhappy and without rest. The greater our trials and afflictions, the more we need a divine support. We have not a hope left within ourselves; let us transfer our hope to God. Earth fails us; let us then cling to heaven.

But our God is good and merciful! exclaims the persevering sinner. And are you evil for the very reason that God is good? Thou art good, oh, my God! and, Thou art merciful. But the sinner knows not Thy goodness or he would not offend Thee. And what signifies the mercy of God to us, if we refuse his mercy and continue in our sin? "God is good, and God is merciful, and therefore let me sin on." Well may the Almighty complain of such souls through His prophet, that "upon my very back these sinners build their crimes, and lengthen out their iniquities." But if the Almighty complains that His goodness is thus made the ground-work of ingratitude, He also declares the consequences—"The just Lord," He adds, "will crush those sinners." He is also just—just towards those who abuse His mercy. And—a truth far more terrible—His justice is an attribute of His very goodness. Were God just alone, what creature could stand before His sight? Were He merciful only, what end would there be to the spreading of evil and the up-rising of ingratitude,

until goodness herself were overwhelmed by the general flood of iniquity? To His very goodness God owes the punishment of evil deeds. If good be to reign, evil must be destroyed. If the sinner will accept of timely mercy, God will destroy his sin without destroying himself: but if he will not accept of mercy in its season, and if he will still go on persevering in the multiplication of his crimes; God, in his supreme love of justice and of goodness, and in his abomination of evil, must necessarily destroy both the sin and the sinner—both the branches and the root of an evil which He sees is past all cure. “The Lord is good to those that fear Him;” says the prophet. And, “His mercy is upon them that fear Him;” sings the psalmist. But, to those who fear Him not, to those who fear not to abuse both His goodness and His mercy, who with a hard and impenitent heart, as the great apostle describes them, go on despising the riches of the patience and long endurance of God, however long he may have awaited their repentance; to the sinner who thus perseveres in rejecting the call of God and delaying his conversion, there remains, as the apostle declares, but those treasures of wrath and indignation, which, as the sinner multiplies them, the Almighty stores and lays them up in His treasury of justice until the day of the revelation of His terrible judgment. What must be the rigour of that justice, which, so far from anger and emotion over all this provocation, is infinitely patient: whose proceedings are measured by the laws of an infinite goodness; which allows to the sinner all leisure to the last, and, at the last, finds equal glory in pardoning the timely penitent and in punishing the persevering sinner.

“God loves mercy and justice;” sings the psalmist. But His mercy is ever foremost and comes to meet us on the way, that if we will not lay hold of mercy we may be utterly naked of defence against the strokes of justice. God

has placed mercy, observes St. Basil, upon the steps which lead up to the throne of justice. She throws herself before us and offers her kindly aid; but if we will not be her clients, if we refuse her intercession, if we pass her by neglectingly and reject her proffered aid, we shall find ourselves ushered into the august presence of Justice, with no better company than our crimes turned our accusers, whilst even Mercy herself is called in to give her reluctant testimony against us. Justice was patient and expectant until Mercy had tried her influence; and she with all the mildness of her character counselled us to humble ourselves, to bow down like the publican in sorrow, and, with all the griefs of repentance, to break the spirit of our confident pride. But when Justice beholds how we reject both her healing counsels, her offers of grace, and her friendly intercession; when he sees us still obstinate of heart and impenitent of spirit, still self-confident and conceited, like the pharisee, and without any reverence or fear for his judgments:—then Justice resumes his suspended rights, and exercises his power with a terrible sway over the unrepentant sinner.

Read the sacred Scriptures, and from end to end of those sacred books will you find, that, whilst God is nothing but mercy and clemency to such as fear him truly, and from the terrors of his justice take refuge in repentance; so does He unceasingly denounce judgments upon them that fear Him not, but go fearlessly, recklessly, perseveringly on in their crimes. In every one of the numerous examples of conversion and of reprobation which are there recorded, you will find, that conversion is ever the lot of those who receive the proffered grace without delay; whilst final reprobation is the doom of those who, rejecting grace when it is offered them, presume to appoint for themselves a time for the return of the mercy of God. Thus did King Saul, and in vain did the prophet Samuel pray whole nights to

God for the king ; the king found not the return of grace, but the Lord answered his prophet—"How long wilt thou continue to weep over Saul, seeing that I have rejected him?" But no sooner does another prophet call David to the remembrance of his sin, than he repents and avows his guilt without delay, and he hears that he is pardoned. On the first hearing of their sentence, the inhabitants of Ninive begin to repent and to do penance. And such is the power of speedy repentance, even over the express judgments of God himself, that in three days they save themselves from the decrees of the divine justice. For seven days, unceasingly repeated, is the warning given to the inhabitants of Jericho ; solemnly does it walk round the walls and shew itself unto every eye within that city ; but they neither relent nor sue for mercy ; the time is past, and they perish. Many and often came warnings to Pharaoh, king of Egypt—terrible warnings ; but no sooner does the pressure of instant fear pass from before his eyes, than he hardens his heart "this time also," and "this time," and again "this time," until God at length destroys him. Let the sinner but relent and turn to God, and God is nothing but mercy. He requires not a long and laborious time of trial ; He delays not to shew his gracious countenance to the penitent : "Turn to me," are his consoling words, "and I will turn to you." He leaves us not in doubt of his merciful designs—"Do penance," He says, "and live." He confirms His promise of life to the repentant, by an oath the most tremendous that even the Almighty himself can make—He swears by His eternal existence that he longs to pardon and receive the penitent :—"As I live, says the Lord, I will not the death of the sinner, but that he turn to me and live." There is no delay on His part. You confess your sins, and He inclines to listen to you : you repent, and He waits to pardon : you manifest yourself before His minister in the sorrow of your heart before His sight, and

He blots out your sins from His remembrance: you judge yourselves, and He ceases to judge: you, with your whole heart, turn towards Him, and He, in fatherly clemency, turns to His prodigal child. You, by the side of his representative, expose your wounds to the Son of God, and he, touched with compassion, says—"Go, thou art healed—thy sins are forgiven thee—go in peace." Associated to his body, you are safe; "For there is no condemnation," as St. Paul declares, "for those who are in Christ Jesus"—who turn towards him, who invoke his forgiveness, who, united to him, accept the washing of his blood. No sooner does the confession of our guilt with its cry for mercy escape from the penitent heart, than the Son of God has pronounced the healing words. And, being justified by him, who is there shall condemn us? The Father will not, for He has delivered all his judgment to the Son. And the Son, instead of judging us, died to deliver us from judgment. He meekly offers us grace, escape, deliverance. But if we refuse to listen to his clement and forgiving voice, the Son of God is constituted our judge, and he has no resource, but, weeping as he wept over the blindness and obstinacy of Jerusalem, to abandon us to present desolation, and to reserve us for the dread hour of final justice. And will he then condemn us? He waits, my brethren, to see if we will condemn ourselves. For then will he rejoice and take our sins to his own account; then will he take that sentence which is recorded against us in the court of His Father, and blotting it with his atoning blood, he will affix it to his cross, whilst the angels beholding will rejoice in our change and praise his victory. What shall the Eternal Father find against us? In place of the sentence, He sees the blood of his Holy Son. And whither shall He look to find even that blotted sentence? To the rugged cross where it is fastened, and where the dearly beloved Son is extended, whose sufferings and sacrifice arrest the

eye of His Eternal Father, and whose pleadings for mercy can alone be heard. What condemnation, then, remains for those who are in Christ, who associate themselves to the sorrows and humiliations of his passion, and become the contrite members of his great contrition? It only remains that they shew forth the sincerity of their conversion by producing such fruits as are worthy of repentance.

By how many examples do the sacred Scriptures confirm this consoling truth. Our divine Master has given us the type of them all in that prodigal child, who, after abandoning his father's house, and wasting all his father's gifts in riot, dissipation, and the worst of company, is brought to so great an extremity, that, moved by the mere sense of his wretchedness, he recalls to mind what a generous abundance falls to the share of even the lowest servant of his father's house. Filled with misery, pain, and want, the image of his father's goodness arises to his mind—humbled, ashamed, and broken of his self-confidence, he returns towards his father, who, seeing him from afar, runs out to meet him, falls upon his neck, pours his forgiveness on his child, puts on his finger the ring of reconciliation, clothes him with a rich garment, as of his first love, and proclaims his joy greater at the return of this lost one, than he had ever felt moved with over his more faithful and dutiful son. It is the conduct of our heavenly Father over the children of sin and sorrow, who, though moved at first but by the sense of their miseries, return repentant to their Father's house. The sinful Magdalen falls repentant at the feet of her Lord, and immediately hears the words of forgiveness. The palsied man turns to our Saviour with faith and supplication, and receives the forgiveness of his sins. The adulteress stands in his presence confused and self-condemned, and he sends her away in peace. He looks upon Peter, and Peter at a look is moved for his sin, repents, and is forgiven. He calls upon Paul, who has blasphemed

and persecuted him, and at the first call of his voice he repents and becomes a vessel of election. He enters the house of Zacheus, Zacheus at once makes promise of restitution for every wrong deed, and he hears that he is saved. The dying thief begs a remembrance, and he is promised paradise. The Samaritan prays him, the Centurion entreats him, the Channanean implores him, and each prayer is answered by his healing words.

But if these examples of conversion and recovery are full of consolation and security to the penitent, they are terrible to the persevering sinner. For everywhere the first grace offered is the grace accepted, and the first call of God is obeyed without delay: but neither in these, nor in any example of conversion which the sacred Scriptures record, do we find an instance of a sinner's being converted and saved, who has delayed and put off the hour of the divine visitation. The door of mercy is not closed, we may perceive, to even the greatest of sinners, nor even to those who have sinned the longest; but we find it closed to those who make a mockery of the divine mercy, who play fast and loose with the divine gifts, who let pass the solemn hour in which God has especially touched them with His grace, and go perseveringly on in their sins. Judas, even Judas himself, in that tender rebuke of the Son of God, when he was betrayed, received the divine call after his sin; but he delayed and hardened himself, and his repentance became one of despair: yet had even Judas, remarks St. Ambrose, gone with his repentance to Jesus, whom he had crucified, instead of going to the Jews, even Judas himself would have found mercy and forgiveness.

After the first conversion of the penitents of the Gospel, we learn not that any of them again abused the mercy of God; but that they stood in fear, that they afflicted their souls, that they chastised their bodies, that they brought forth worthy fruits of repentance. If, as an early Father

remarks, the heart of the sinner is the first criminal, and must be first afflicted, the body also, as this Father adds, is its accomplice, and must be made to share its chastisements. Of those holy penitents, whose after-history has come down to us, we know that they fasted, they prayed, they wept, they mourned, they loved God, they helped the poor. But of none of these penitents do we find, that after rejecting the divine mercy during health, he found that mercy waiting his leisure on the bed of death.

All men are agreed that a death-bed repentance is commonly a virtue of necessity rather than of free choice; all men agree that a repentance of necessity, not of choice, is no repentance at all; and yet, in their own particular instance, though they allow it not in the case of others, will men blind themselves with the absurd promise of security in a death-bed repentance. Granting you may have the desire of repentance, what time is there then for bringing forth its worthy fruits? What time for weeping when its season is past? What time for penance when time is no more? Does any one talk of fasting, and restitution, and a life of repentance, in a spirit of self-sacrifice, when death is on his lips? Is the time of agony a time to voluntarily mortify the flesh and willingly to afflict the heart? Where shall he strike the body which death is dissolving? Truly an heroic generosity! A most generous spirit of self-sacrifice! A sacrifice well calculated to atone for the abuses of grace, and to appease the divine indignation! Now, at least, to think of satisfying Almighty justice, when you can neither sin nor repent any longer. "If a man does penance in health," says St. Augustine, "and so dies, he is dissolved from the bonds that withheld him from Christ, and is carried to his rest. But if a man, moved by extreme necessity of sickness, desires to receive repentance, though we deny him not what he asks, yet we presume not that he departs in good case. I say, we do not presume on this. A faithful man who has

lived well goes away securely. He who dies the hour he is baptized goes away securely. He who is reconciled, and does penance, and lives well afterwards, goes away securely. But he who puts off his repentance to the last," continues this holy Father, "I am not sure that he goes away securely. Do not, however, mistake me. Do I say that the man who repents in the end will be condemned? I do not say so. Do I say he will be saved? No. What then do I say? I say, I presume not, I promise not, I know not. Would you escape the danger and uncertainty of this doubt? Do penance whilst you are in health, and you are safe. And why are you safe? Because you did penance when you might have sinned. But if you repent when you can sin no longer, it is not you who leave your sins, but your sins that leave you."

In short, it is a maxim of the servants of God, which I repeat in the words of a holy Father, that repentance in sickness is commonly a sickly repentance, and that repentance at death is commonly the death of repentance. Would to heaven that those who go on in their sins and dream about repentance at the last, were but familiar with death-bed scenes. The consoling deaths of the just would only add to their salutary alarms. But in cases of delay like their own—I am called to one, a long life of unfaithfulness to God, a broken bewildered mind, and a memory all but gone; I hasten the next morning with a tremulous hope of better things. He has departed in the night. I am called to another. She is in a consuming fever. Her eyes range wildly round, she is restless and tossing, as the remains of her strength contend with the ardour of disease; for an instant she recognizes me; one "Have mercy on me!" and then again delirium, and nothing is heard but—"Water! water! I thirst! I thirst!" And in a few hours that distracted body is lifeless, pale, and cold. I am called to another. He is agonizing. The dank dews of death are

gathered on his brow. His breast heaves convulsively; his tongue is thickened and speechless; his throat alone is audible amidst the mournful silence. I hastily perform rites to which he seems to be insensible; and in one half-hour he is summoned to his great account. And in how many cases, by some mysterious chance, the dying man departs before the servant of God arrives by his side. For seldom in these cases of repentance delayed, does the sinner begin to think of his great need until the hopes of life have first begun to disappear. Do I judge any one? No. To God alone does each man stand or fall. I judge not. Nay, I hope the best, and I think the best. But I remember also the oracle of divine truth, pronounced by the lips of St. Paul, that "the end of a man is according to his works."

Having considered and taken to heart this truth, my brethren, and knowing how small is the safety to be found in delay, how can I do better, in my efforts to bring you to a salutary and an instant resolution, than by setting before you the meditations of a saint whom the Spirit of God illuminated, and which, if they fill you with a holy fear, may also, I pray, work in you the present grace of repentance?

"Two thoughts occupy my soul incessantly," says St. Ephrem, "and plunge her in mortal terrors. The first is, that long chain of sins, which, beginning with my life, is lengthened out to the present hour; the second is, the terrible reckoning which I shall have to render on the day of judgment. What a deplorable contrast with myself. My senses have grown feebler and have lost their vigour; but the fire of my passions burns as consumingly as ever. My body is weaker than in my youth, whilst my heart in its desires is as impetuous as at the first. What I was in youth, that am I still; and the last of my years are like those that are gone. Death will soon touch me; and, after

death, comes judgment ; and the terrible judgment is followed by the punishments reserved for sinners.

“ To be for ever banished from the presence of God is a dreadful punishment ; but to burn in a fire that shall never be extinguished—never extinguished ! The fire of concupiscence is changed to keenest torment. Our fires are quickest when the blaze burns brightest ; but the fires of hell, the more intensely and the quicker they burn, the more horribly are they wrapped in thickest darkness, affording not one spark of light to scatter the profound night which ever reigns in those eternal caverns.—‘ Topheth is dark.’ Ours devour their fuel and expire ; the fires of hell burn unconsumed—such is the eternal decree. Ours give us comfort ; but those in their darkness devour ; yet are they never silent from the sounds of wailing, and of gnashing teeth. The worm of conscience has grown a giant on the food of our remorse : he rends, he desolates, he tortures, without hope : all is endless as it is dark—‘ eternal fire.’ Such is the divine oracle. The execution of judgment is preceded by manifestation of the conscience before the assembled universe. What a moment of confusion ! when my secret sins come out before all ; when those who admired me, because they knew me not, turn against me. Fearful remembrances ! All my sins are my accusers. What a stripping before men and angels ! What becomes of me when the Judge—the same who loved me, who offered me pardon and mercy, shall pronounce the terrible sentence that shuts the gates of divine beatitude, and opens those dark portals ?—Oh ! why was I born ? And how blessed are they who have died before their trials.

“ But whilst I reflected on these sorrowful things,” continues the saint, “ suddenly there grew within my heart a thought which raised my fallen spirit. At the moment that I was verging on despair, there came to me, from her deep

solitude, the spirit of repentance ; and approaching to my ear, with a mild and tender look, she whispered me this comfort :—‘ Listen, O sinner ! And I will teach you to draw profit from this sorrow and these tears. Banish that dark and heavy sadness, which would weigh you down to despair, and keep you from salvation. The Lord is good and merciful, He desires to see you in His heavenly abodes. Enter on the ways of penance ; and, full of joy at your return, He will be the first to open His arms to receive you. However great be your iniquities, His love of the penitent is a thousand times greater. Repentance will disarm His justice ; she will plead your cause at the day of judgment ; she is sure to obtain for you the grace of forgiveness from God our Saviour, who gave His life to obtain this forgiveness for you.’ ”

A CHRISTMAS SERMON.

THE Fathers of the church, from whom we have derived the most exalted views of the eternal birth and generation of the adorable Son of God, are St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. Chrysostom. To the numerous errors which arose in the East, opposed to the divine nature of our blessed Redeemer, we probably owe the sublimity of thought with which these and other oriental Fathers have exalted this heavenly mystery, as well as the surpassing eloquence in which they have clothed their conceptions. To the heresy of Marcion, and of those others who in the West denied the fact of an actual incarnation of the divine Word, we are equally indebted for the great conceptions and striking views of Tertullian regarding the mystery of the birth of the eternal Son of God in the flesh. Whilst St. Bernard has spoken with the profoundest pathos and the sweetest unction on the tender mystery of the Infant God. In the following sermon, the mystery of the Incarnation is contemplated in each of the

views taken by these Fathers successively. The opening, with but little change, is from Chrysostom. On the divine generation, thoughts have also been drawn from St. Gregory Nazianzen; and, on the human birth of our divine Redeemer, from Tertullian. This discourse may, therefore, be compared to one of those old pictures, in which the artist has brought together on the same canvass the illustrious doctors of different ages of the church, some more remote with others more recent, and has represented them contemporaneously absorbed in the contemplation of the same adorable mysteries, whilst he ventures to introduce himself in some retired part of the picture in a posture of homage and veneration.

A CHRISTMAS SERMON.

"The Word was made flesh."—St. John i.

"You shall find the child wrapped in swathing-bands and laid in a manger."—St. Luke ii.

THIS is a great festival ; a festival of strange and wondrous import. My ears receive the songs of the shepherds as their voices ascend from their solitary fields to mingle with those canticles that fill the sphere of heaven. Angels, archangels, cherubim, and seraphim give glory to the Lord in hymns of joy and victory. A rapture more than ordinary animates their gladness, to the honour of a festival which has brought on earth the Divinity to be united to our humanity. Sublime decree of Providence ! Unutterable goodness ! The God above the heavens has come down unto our nothingness ; and man, so much farther fallen below his condition than he imagines, is raised on high. Bethlehem is exalted and raised to the heavens, or the heavens more truly have come down to Bethlehem. I mean not those heavens which cover it like a dome, whose blue-arched vault the bright stars decorate, and whose spaces the sun warms with radiant fires ; but that Heaven of heavens has descended which rings round its boundless spheres, re-echoing the thanksgivings of its ecstatic choirs, and which the Sun of Justice fills with endless light. Ask not how the wonder is wrought. Where

God commands, nature understands her duty of obedience. He has willed it; He has the power; He is come; He has saved us. He who *is*, who from all eternity subsists, is born in time. That divine being who, by His essential nature, ever exists, has become that which He was not;—of God He is made man. I believe it. I receive it. It is impossible that the human mind could ever, unless it were the case, have either arisen to the invention or have dared to publish the thought. Not that any thing is changed or ceases in the divine substance by this wondrous union, for it is at no expense of His divinity that God becomes man. For He could no more undergo any change in His divine nature than He could become God by mere growth of his manhood. As He is the Word of the Eternal Father, He is unchanged in His essence, and incapable of any suffering. “And the Word was made flesh,” preserving the full and perfect integrity of the divine nature. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not”—for the Jews, amongst whom he is born, are not pleased to acknowledge his miraculous coming. The Pharisees elude it by their false interpretations of the Scriptures. The Scribes fall into error by setting the folly of their reasonings against the inspired prophets. Herod, it is true, sought the newborn child; but was this with a view of paying him homage? It was to take away his innocent life.

In our day, my brethren, what a change. “He is not hidden from their children,” sings the psalmist, “nor from those who follow after.” Kings have come to his cradle, attracted by the King of Heaven. Even kings have learned from this cradle the nothingness of pride. They wonder, indeed, and admire at the mystery; they are amazed at the secret path by which he enters into a world, which he is absolutely entitled to command and rule—how, dispensing with the attendance of heaven’s hosts, through the chaste gate of Mary’s womb—a way so strange and new, He

makes His entry upon earth. Yet, to the armies of heaven the mystery is kept no secret. The Archangel Gabriel is the messenger of its announcement, and the angelic multitude comes out from God to proclaim His glorious advent. Thus, in the midst of all His human abasement, does the Son of God retain His divine glory. All the earth comes to Him. Soldiers come to Him, as the giver of victories. Women come to Him; for He is born of woman, and has changed their child-birth sorrows into joy. Virgins come, because He is a virgin's son, the Creator of the breast and of its milky fountains. Children gather round Him, because He is become a child, and "out of the lips of sucklings has found a perfect praise:" by the blood of infants He was victorious over Herod's fury—these were His first martyrs. Men come unto Him; because He is made man, that He may heal the diseases of His servants. Shepherds draw near; for He is the good shepherd who lays down his life for His sheep. Priests are by His side; for He is the supreme High Priest, anointed and consecrated, according to the order of Melchisedec. Servants approach with confidence; because he has taken the form of a servant, to deliver us from servitude. All the poor draw near to His person by special privilege; for He has become a poor man with them, to teach the value of endurance. Publicans, and of their number He chooses an evangelist; thieves, and He raises one from the cross to heaven; sinners of the city, and He suffers one to wash his feet with tears;—all sinners approach to adore Him—the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of all the world: the wise man, to defend Him; the shepherd, to bless Him; the publican, to declare His truth; the sinner of the city, to throw perfumes on His feet; the Samaritan woman, to find the source of life; and the woman of Channanea, to declare to Him her faith.

Amidst this universal joy and adoration, I also will abandon myself to gratitude, and in raptures will I solemn-

nize the festival of my God. But far, O very far from me, be the conduct of those persons, who, profaning this sacred season, turn the festival of our reparation into a mere festivity of the flesh. I will not begin by gathering my friends, by kindling the torch of riot, by sitting at sensual banquets, and striking up the giddy instruments of profane wantonness. But I will gather with the poor and the devout, and I will carry to my heart the swathing-bands of Jesus newly born. For these bandages of poverty are the signs of my life and of my salvation. "Behold!" exclaims the angel to the poor shepherds, from his tabernacle of light, "this shall be a sign to you, you shall find Him wrapped in swathing-bands." Let us, then, take reverently in our hands these venerable bandages, so poor and so humble, and whilst they inspire us with truth and love, let us with the angelic choirs proclaim to the highest heavens, new "Glory unto God;" and, as we mingle with the shepherds, let us proclaim unto the earth, "Peace to men of good will." For me my Lord is born in a manner so unutterable. In the bosom of God from all eternity, He is to-day on Mary's breast. In the splendour of the holies, before the morning star, is He, by the privilege of His divine nature, born of God His Father, in such a manner as He alone knows whose Son He is—Spirit of Spirit, Wisdom of Wisdom, and God of God. Whilst against all the laws and precedents of nature, He is born to-day of the virgin's womb, as the grace and operation of the Divine Spirit can alone comprehend—flesh of her flesh and blood of her blood. Truly God of God; and truly man of virgin flesh. In heaven, He is the only Son of God, born of God alone. On earth, He is the only Son of Mary, born of a virgin alone. Without mother in heaven, without father on earth; of the Father, a divine generation; of the mother, a spiritual conception; it is as far impossible to explain the one of these mysteries, as it is beyond our power to search the

secret of the other. Let us, then, in silence adore this twofold mystery, and let us not presume to think that we may in any manner comprehend it by the mere force of idle words. For it is not any thing in the order of nature that in these divine operations is manifested unto us; they are the acts of an almighty and eternal power, which transpire in regions far exalted above the sphere of our nature, or the horizon of our views, and to which it becomes our mind, in all reason, to submit her unequal and short-falling powers, by the devout and humble exercise of faith. The works of nature the Almighty, by express concession, has permitted and delivered to the disputes and searches of men; but into truths that dwell beyond the reach of every natural power, our understanding cannot penetrate, nor be of any avail. Are we in consequence to cease from our attention to the words of divine truth? Nay, truly do we need to be the more attentive; humbly considering and confessing where our powers begin and end, let us never vainly strive to comprehend those mysteries which, from their very nature with relation to our own, demand the silent homage of belief.

Pardon me, my brethren, if, confounded with its sublimity, and trembling to approach more nearly to so great a mystery, I seem to have begun where I should have ended this discourse. What words will help us, what inspirations will guide us, as we approach more closely to consider the God incarnate? Let us, in spirit, my brethren, join the company of these lowly shepherds, that we also may see this Word that has come to pass.

The night hangs over all—the solemn night is in the middle of her course, as the solitary shepherds keep their watches over their flocks—a night of gloom and darkness like the state of the nations—for over Judea only does there linger a parting twilight. Amidst this dreary darkness suddenly there shines forth a light from heaven. The shepherds run, the angels come forth from the light, preach-

ing joy, great joy, to men : the shepherds hear ; they are bewildered ; they recover mind and strength ; they set forth, pondering and anticipating strange wonders—let us join them on their road to Bethlehem. What is this giver of peace that has come into the world ? What Glory of God are we destined to behold ? What marvellous child shall we see ? But now do we near the very presence—this is the region which heaven itself has so honoured and blessed—graver interests take place of curiosity—deeper emotions subdue the eager anticipations of our heart : this is the gate of heaven—let us uncover the head, take our shoes from our feet, and leave aside each earthly thought, as we come upon this holy ground that bears the child proclaimed with songs and choirs from heaven. And is this the scene we expected ? A neglected ruin, turned into a stable ; three decayed boards tacked together for a manger, a bundle of littered straw for its provision and furniture, the ox and the ass claiming rightful possession of this palace of misery. Yes, all the dumb and patient creatures which God has made for man are represented in this act of creation repaired ; they have shared in the consequences of our fall, and what do they not endure from our passions ?—they expect a share of mercy for the sake of this new birth ; let us treat them then with kindness and compassion. And there is Mary, so poor, so destitute of help, and yet so meek, so very modest, and so well content, and the poor carpenter ; their eyes are fixed, tenderly and reverently fixed, upon that feeble, newborn child, bandaged and wailing in the straw of that desolate manger. This is all that is visible, all that meets the eye, all that human sense or human reason is able to fathom of the scene. Nothing but real poverty, real distress, and real helplessness. “ And is this then the great joy to all people ? This the new glory unto God Himself ? This the peace whose blessings shall gladden all men of good will ? This the Saviour of His people ? Why have we

taken this long and dreary journey? Away with these unsightly bandages, this crib, and this miserable shed! Many scenes of human misery have we known like this, only it is the most hopeless and forlorn of the whole!" Such, my brethren, would be the thoughts, such ever have been the exclamations, of those mere men of nature who measure truth by sense, and the Word of God by reason. But we, for our part, my brethren, whilst with the shepherds we gaze upon this poor and humble scene, let us listen to the voice of faith.

Those songs of the angels were not a delusion. That shining light from heaven illuminates the obscurity of the stable of Bethlehem. "Behold, there is born to you a Saviour!" say they, "who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David;" this manger, and these swathing bands, they tell us, are the very signs by which to recognize His person; they are the instruments selected in place of archangel trumpets, to proclaim an eternal decree. For seven hundred years the voice of the prophet Isaias had slept in silence since he spoke; does that voice revive again, that he so clearly describes this mysterious birth? "There shall come forth," says the prophet, "a branch from the root of Jesse; and a flower shall spring up from his root, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him." The root of Jesse is the blood of David. The branch is Mary, born of David. The flower is Jesus, born of Mary. And in vain, exclaims Tertullian, does heresy strive to separate the fruit from the flower out of which it is formed, the flower from the branch, or the branch from the root—ourselves from Jesus, Jesus from Mary, or Mary from David.

Thus far, my brethren, have we listened to what is told us of the human generation as of the Son of David; invoking anew the word of eternal truth, let us now listen to what is said of the divine generation as of the Son of God. Listen then attentively with the ear of faith, for it is still

the venerable voice of Isaias, after seven hundred years of silence, that describes the scene before us. "Behold," he exclaims, "a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, and his name is THE GOD WITH US." If, in our astonishment, we inquire how this shall be? the archangel of God has replied to the question from that virgin's lips—that the Spirit of God shall descend upon her, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow her person. If we ask the cause of this new and mysterious act of creative grace? the archangel of God has declared it unto Joseph—that this child shall save His people from their sins. If we ask the time and circumstances of this marvellous operation of the Divine Spirit, that Spirit of Wisdom has described them long before the event—"Whilst silence held all things, and the night was in the middle of her course, thy Almighty Word from the royal seats came down." Verily, my brethren, this child, this poor child, is the Son of God, and God. Come let us adore! He *is* the God with us—this very child in swathing bands; what room is there left for our pride? Let us weep and adore! But ignorant pride refuses to be humbled; and the Ebionites, like so many who have followed them, closing their ears to the divine testimonies, and consulting but the eye of the flesh, can see nothing beyond that desolate stable of Bethlehem. They close their eyes to the heavenly light which has shone round about its visitors; they will not raise them high enough from the earth to see the star that rests above it; they stop their ears to the voices of angels, of archangels, and of prophets; and thus, admitting but the human birth, which with their earthly senses they behold, they boldly deny both His Eternal Divinity to the Son of God, and to us the consolation of our God amidst us. It is then that St. John, that apostle of love, who reclined his pure head on the breast of Him who lies now before us as a feeble infant, and who knew the secrets of that breast, takes alarm; and, inspired with that

spirit which searches even the deep things of God, he ascends above the earth, and, soaring as on eagle's wings, he ascends above the heavens, passing all their hosts and choirs, until he is admitted to contemplate, in the very bosom of God, the full glory of His eternal generation from the Father; and, again descending, covered with the splendour of this light, radiant with a diviner glory than Moses returning from converse with God, as he is the bearer of a greater revelation; that he may for ever confound the gainsayers of this mystery of godliness; the evangelist thus breaks forth:—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God all things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and we saw His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." There is no more any darkness over Bethlehem. All that was obscure or invisible to the flesh grows clear and lightsome to the eye of faith. What glory, and what abjection! Christians, let us adore! In silent gratitude, let us adore! For God this day is born in man, and man is born in God. That feeble, trembling frame contains the God whom the heavens cannot compass nor the universe comprise. The Almighty Wisdom holds His counsels in the chambers of that slender brow; beneath that poor and palpitating breast is concealed the infinite heart of God, with His love and goodness. What mercy in those tears! They are the beginning of His sacrifice. Those tender arms stretch forth Almighty pardon. Christians, let us also weep, let us weep and adore.

But, whilst employed in devout adoration, should some one of the victims of pride intrude upon us his reasonings, and imperiously ask why God should so abase Himself, and take the lowly condition of our nature? Let us calmly reply with St. Gregory of Nyssa:—What then would you

have of His goodness? That He would heal and save you? Tell us, then, what the world in its wisdom has been enabled to do to this effect, and cease to prescribe to God the manner and the measure of His benefits. What greater proof than this can you have of His goodness? He glows forth from the manger in love to ungrateful man. What proof would you have of His condescension? In the form of a slave, He takes our flesh to free us from our prison, and to bear our chains Himself. What proof would you have of His wisdom? Our pride will not stoop beneath His power, so He subdues us to His weakness and infirmities. What proof would you have of His justice? He has become the pledge and security for us, and proves the extent of our debts. What proof would you have of His power? He will not allow His flesh to see corruption, but, transforming it to glory by His power, stands revealed the author of its life. What more proof would you have of His love—of the greatness of a love surpassing all created love? For charity in person is come unto us incarnate in sweetest mercy and divinest goodness.

“From eternity unto eternity thou art God,” exclaims the prophet, and thou art made the child of a day. Why should our Lord thus have humbled Himself? and why abridge his glory to the manger? That we, O Christians, might learn to be lowly. For He now exclaims as loudly by example as afterwards by precept—“Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.” That humility, these sufferings, and this poverty are all for us. He needs them not, but He knows how much we need them. They all proclaim to us the one same truth, and all condemn the error of this world. They all conspire to pronounce the life, upon which the Divine Truth Himself has entered, to be a life not designed for sensual gratifications and for the contenting of our present earthly wills, but to be a life of trial, a life of purification, and of preparation for a life to come.

For my instruction, exclaims the devout St. Bernard, was this time and place selected. The tenderness of this trembling frame, the tears and wailings of this little child are all for me. The very poverty and watchfulness of these simple-minded shepherds, to whom the birth of my Saviour is revealed, are all on my account, and are ordained for my example. He is born in the winter; the Son of God is born in the night; and was it by chance that He was born in this inclement season and darkness of the night? To whom belong all seasons—the winter and the summer, the day and the night? Other infants have no choice. But Christ, though man, was in the beginning with God, the wisdom and the power of God, and that power and that wisdom they are with him even now. The Son of God has therefore by His wisdom, and by the very preference of His wisdom, made selection of whatever is most difficult and most painful to Himself—especially to a child, and to the son of a poor mother, who in her poverty and distress finds scarcely enough of coarse cloth to bind his delicate frame, and with difficulty obtains even a manger in which to lay him down for repose. It is not indeed such a choice as this world would approve or sanction by its opinion. Surely, then, exclaims St. Bernard, continuing to meditate upon the mystery, either the Son of God is mistaken or the world is strangely deluded. But the wisdom of God, can that ever be mistaken? Justly, then, and very safely may we conclude, that this wisdom of the flesh—a wisdom which the apostle declares to be death—this wisdom of the flesh is false, and an enemy to God; and the wisdom of this world is vain—it is a mere folly before His sight. And God has chosen to Himself the poor and weak things of this life, that he may confound in His person the great things of the world and the conceits of the flesh to the demonstration and conviction of their nothingness. For the Son of God has selected by choice this lowly condition of affliction and of poverty as

the most useful and purifying to the flesh. He does not speak, but all that is around him proclaims and preaches to us this truth. His very limbs, in their infantine sufferings on their hard and rugged place of rest, refute the world with all its vanities. Why chose he not the robust and full-grown frame of the matured age of wisdom, instead of this infant weakness? O wisdom, drawn forth from thy secret heavens! O truly incarnate and hidden with a veil! And yet was it promised, through Isaías, that this child should “know how to reject whatever is evil, and to choose whatever is good.” The pleasures of the body then are dangerous of evil, and only its afflictions hold out promises of good. For has not this child of wisdom, this infant Word, rejected the one whilst he has deliberately chosen the other? The Divine Word is made flesh—a poor, a delicate, an infant flesh—and has dwelt with us in the obscurity of the flesh, and with us, in the obscurity of flesh itself obscured, still continues He to dwell.

What, exclaims the same devout Father, what, after this, can be more unworthy—what more worthy of all condemnation—seeing how the Lord of heaven has become a child—than that man should longer magnify himself upon the earth? For this, He, “who in the form of God is equal to His Father, has annihilated himself, taking the form of a slave.” For this has He emptied himself of His power, His glory, and His majesty, retaining but His goodness and His mercy. For, as the apostle declares, “the benignity and humanity of God our Saviour has become visible.” His power is manifested in the creation; His wisdom, in the government of the universe; but the benignity of His mercy shines most clearly forth in His incarnation. He spoke to the ancients in a language of power:—“I am the Lord”—“I am God.” “Do this”—“obey my voice”—and the Israelites feared Him with a great fear. He appeared to the philosophers of the ancient world in a remote,

an obscure, a majestic grandeur ; and they were wrapped in wonder and vague uncertainties. This power and wisdom were they forbidden to imitate, as to this grandeur and majesty they were forbidden to aspire. But to us, dear Christians, He shews Himself clearly, in benignity and goodness, in compassion and in love. His language invites us to draw near and to imitate.—“Come ye all to me”—“I have given you example, that as I have done, you also do”—“love as I have loved you”—“be ye followers of me.” He came formerly in the terrors of his justice, to punish and exact, and filled all men with dread at His approach. “I heard thy voice and feared, and I hid myself.” Such was the exclamation of our first father after his sin, when he heard the approach of God, and stood trembling at his voice. And such, in every age, have been the exclamations of his children, until the Son of God dispels these terrors by His presence in our flesh. He appeared unto Moses, and that meekest of men turned his countenance away that he might not look upon the burning terrors of the presence of the Lord. “Let not God speak unto us, lest we die,” exclaim to their law-giver the assembled Israelites, the very people whom God had chosen for His own. “We have seen the Lord ; we shall surely die,” is the cry of the parents of Samson. “Woe unto me,” exclaims Jeremias, “for I have seen the Lord.” All men, even the prophets, felt the approach of God to be the approach of anger, of calamity, and of judgment to His offending creatures as yet unredeemed. In their dread and consternation, they seemed ever to have before their eyes that living sword, which waved and flashed its guarding fires about the approaches to the paradise of God. But now, we no longer seek to hide ourselves in fear ; we feel no terror at the sounds of His approaching voice. He has become an infant of a day, a feeble infant without voice, and his infant wailings move our pity, in place of

fears, whilst his poor mother binds these swathing bands with care about his weak and delicate limbs.

Wonderful condescension of Almighty goodness! His fear did not subdue us. His terrors quelled not our pride. Neither His threats nor His commands obtained the victory over our obstinacy. So He becomes a little child that He may subdue us with compassion for His state. He who made us to His image lies before us, and we gaze, and gaze, and are moved—we melt into tears over our own image in suffering, we look on our own likeness with pity—our pride is dissolved; we forget that He pities and compassionates us. He stretches his infant arms, and our pride is gone; we become child-like with him. He has subdued us, he has found entrance into our souls, and we begin to love. O truly an invention of love! A mystery of mercy! A healing and consoling mystery! He already fights our enemies for us. He tramples on the neck of proud things and lofty powers as his footstool. Those dread enemies of ours, death and sin—that death of soul and death of body, he destroys. Sin he has already destroyed in the very body he has taken. For out of the condemned mass of human nature has he taken it unstained and undefiled, and he withholds it from every sensible gratification that might lead it to corruption. He has rescued it pure and perfect from the hands of the enemy, who deemed the flesh for ever stained and subjected to corruption. It is a presage and a pledge of future victories. He pursues and persecutes the proud enemy through life, humbling himself through all his life and conversation. But when he reaches the end of his earthly existence, then, and in that hour of his passion, shall he take hold of the man of sin and bind him as his everlasting captive, and plunder him of his prey. Death also shall he conquer. First, in that now infant body, which shall arise the first fruits of the dead; then against death shall he

wage a constant war in all his children, raising them by the virtue of his own arising, until that last of enemies, death, shall be entirely destroyed. Therefore, my brethren, shall that body arise, adorned in beauty and in glory, which now lies bound and bandaged. Therefore, shall that glorified body, still obscured, be given to his children, still obscure, as seed is cast into the earth, to be the germ and vital principle of their life and resurrection from the dead.

It is a subject of complaint and grief to the apostle, my brethren, that the carnal man is sold unto sin, and that he cannot see the things that are of the Spirit of God. Not only, therefore, for the redemption, but for the instruction also of the carnal man, the Son of God has appeared in flesh. He, whose mind no mortal knows, whose counsels none can search, who "dwells in unapproachable light," has come to enlighten us and make known his counsel, even to the carnal man, through His flesh; that those who are unwilling to understand the mind of God in His Spirit may even read it in His flesh. If thou canst only see the flesh, if thou canst hear but the voice of the flesh; behold, oh carnal man! God's Spirit appears and speaks by flesh—flesh speaks to flesh—in the very flesh, God tells thee to fly the delights and indulgences of the flesh, for that death is found in all the avenues of carnal joy. This, speaks that stable; this, cries that manger; this, exclaim those infant members; this, also, preach those wailings and those tears. For if Christ weeps, it is not, remarks St. Bernard—whose words I repeat—it is not as others weep. They for their pains and troubles weep; Christ weeps for his affection. They for the heavy yoke, whose load presses hard and harsh on all the children of men, are heard to deplore; but Christ deplores the *sins* of all those countless children of Adam. And already is it certain, already does he anticipate, that for those for whom he now sheds only tears, he will one day shed his blood. These tears are the prophets of his passion.

These swathing bands of the manger but predict the bonds of the grave—they are the emblems of mortality. Those slender arms extended towards us to draw us, by attracting compassion, nearer, he will hold out all his life with invitation, and then will he stretch forth those same hands, wrung with agonies of sorrow, first to his Father, pleading for us, and then, at the command of our very sins, upon the cross. From first to last his sorrows flow from one and the same fountain, in our ingratitude and blindness. “He shone amidst darkness, and it did not comprehend Him. He came unto His own, and His own did not receive Him,” says the evangelist. He comes amongst men, and they send Him to a manger. Thirty years shall He afterwards pass in silent prayer, obedience, and poverty, beneath the eye of His Father only; He will then come forth again a light to men, healing them, and blessing them, and doing them good, and they will again leave him to proclaim that, whilst the very vermin of the earth have their lodgment and their home provided for them, the Son of man has not a place on which to rest His head, until He, who is born to the wood of the manger, is condemned to expire on the wood of the cross. The Son of God, my brethren, has no repose on earth unless in faithful souls. The world at large has ever persecuted and rejected Him. The men of this world know Him not. However readily they may repeat His sacred name, they are neither acquainted with His spirit nor receive His visitations. Over them it was He wept in the manger, in Jerusalem, in the garden, on the cross. But for us, my brethren, let us approach and be enlightened, and become as children with this blessed child. He Himself tells us that if we would enter into His kingdom we must become as little children. Come then, in lowly veneration, in simple and child-like love, come to the manger. Whilst others go after the world and leave Him here abandoned to this rudeness and neglect, let us approach, and as we kneel to Him

and adore, let us offer him the resting-place of a simple and pure heart, for there is the place of his pleasant repose, and the scene of His delight. If this heart be not as yet so pure and child-like, offer it, with this desire at least, that He be pleased to make it such as He can love. For to as many as with pure desire receive Him, who are not born of the blood with its concupiscence, nor of the will of man with his pride, but of the good pleasure of the will of God, to those He has given to become the children of God, and they shall behold the living glory of this child, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

TO

SISTER MARY XAVIER,

The first Sister of Charity, and the first religious of any order, professed in New South Wales, or in any portion of “the fifth division of the globe;” this sermon, preached on the occasion—not such as he would have addressed to her and the community, but such as the circumstances of the audience seemed to require—is, with the permission of the Reverend Superioress, respectfully presented, with the esteem and veneration of

THE UNWORTHY PREACHER,

Who begs her to pray for his soul.

THE PROFESSION
OF
A SISTER OF CHARITY.

THE following sermon was preached at the solemn religious profession of Miss Eliza Williams, called in religion Sister Mary Xavier, which took place in the church at Parramatta, at the period of Easter, in the year 1839, in the presence of a large assemblage, the right reverend the bishop presiding on the occasion. The religious community of which this devout lady was the first member professed in New South Wales—having left the parent house with the filiation a novice—proceeded to the colony under the care of the present writer, in the year 1838, from the convents of Stanhope Street and Gardiner Street, Dublin. Their number, at first but five members, has, since their arrival in the colony, been doubled, and a filiation from the parent house at Parramatta has been established in Sydney. The small community established at Parramatta are in daily

attendance at the large female penitentiary called the Factory, which has within its walls about eight hundred women convicts and three hundred children; they also daily attend the hospital for female convicts in the same town, visit the sick and poor in their houses, instruct such of the ignorant as are sent to them for the purpose, teach a poor school, and give religious instructions to the young ladies of an extensive boarding-school established in the town under their auspices. In Sydney, a community of four members superintend an orphan institute of from eighty to ninety children, distant some three miles out of the town; they visit the female hospital and the sick and poor of the town, instruct the ignorant who are sent to them for the purpose by the clergy, and exercise a general superintendence over five free schools for girls, situated in various parts of the town; they also prepare great numbers of children for the sacraments.

The labours of these devoted religious, and the happy fruits of these labours, especially amongst the female prisoners and the children of the poor, cannot be sufficiently estimated by those who have not witnessed them. They require, indeed, no eulogy; for the name of *Sister of Charity* is everywhere one which implies the most exalted love of God, together with the most heroic and the most constant sacrifice of self to the removal of ignorance and the alleviation of every misery and distress both of mind and body. Their fourth

and peculiar vow, in addition to the three solemn vows which are common to all religious orders, is, "To serve Christ gratuitously in the persons of His poor."

In the composition of the following sermon the influence of St. Bonaventure and of Bossuet will not fail to be perceived.

THE PROFESSION
OF
A SISTER OF CHARITY.

“ And they said . . . Alleluia, and a voice came out from the throne of God, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye his servants, and you that fear Him, little and great : and I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters, saying—Alleluia : Let us rejoice and be glad, and give glory to Him ; for the hour of the nuptials of the Lamb is come, and His spouse hath prepared herself, and it is granted to her to clothe herself . . . in the justification of the saints.”—Apoc. xix. 4—8.

SUCH, St. John tells us, is the scene which passes in heaven when Christ is espoused to a soul. Dear sister in Christ, child of the predilection of the divine love, “ elected,” by the favour of grace, “ from amongst thousands,” to be a willing and a happy victim for the poor of Christ, and for His love, the hour you have so much desired is come. Your most earnest wishes are to be satisfied. It was fitting that your proffered fidelity should undergo the proof of severe trials, and that your soul should be purified by many acts of self-denial, and adorned by a long practice of many virtues, before being admitted to this consummation of her union with her God, in the solemn plighting of her solemn

vows. If for no merits of your own, yet for Christ's merits, and for the exercise of Divine goodness, and for one proof more of Eternal Providence, have you been chosen to be "the first fruits" on this new and vast domain acquired to the church, the first fruits of expiation "to God and to the Lamb," on this innocent land of God's creatures so shamefully stained by the sins of men: the first fruits of holy consecration and of a more divine order of things, by the solemn espousal of your person to the Son of God. Hail holy bride of Christ! Our angels join with yours to salute you on this great day of your espousal. That grace which was in Mary has, by the Divine condescension, come even unto you. The Lord is with you, and His voice has called you to leave house and home and all things—each dear friend of your youth, and each spot dear to memory—that you may follow Him always, that you may be with Him familiarly in His house, that you may be one, in body and in spirit, with the body and the spirit of Christ. And you joyfully welcome the summons—counting all things else as nothing for the exceeding love of Christ. Beholding you from the mysterious trellice of the Canticles, in which His sacred presence is concealed, the words of His Spirit are sounding within the ears of your soul—"My child, give me your heart;" and my knowledge of your spirit gives me the hearing of your joyful response: "My heart is ready, oh God! my heart is ready." And the eternal countenance of our Father who is in heaven smiles down approval, grace, and benediction, on the spiritual marriage about to be solemnized between this fallen daughter of Adam, raised anew, and His own Eternal Son.

The celestial Bridegroom claims you, dear sister, by many titles, and they are very noble. When you were unworthy of His love, He first loved you; when you were lost, He died to save you; with His blood and with His tears, uttering a strong cry, He purchased your redemp-

tion out of the house of the bondage of our common sin ; by His grace, He set you free—pardoned those various frailties to which human nature from her youth is prone, and blessed you with many especial gifts and peculiar favours which are treasured in your memory ; and now, that your liberty is your own, He invites you to share in His own great, generous, virgin sacrifice—to bring your liberty under a happier bondage—to enclose your heart a willing captive within the sanctuary of His will, as His is shut up and sealed within the will of His Eternal Father ; and to espouse Him upon the poverty and abandonment of His cross. “ Oh ! poor little one,” He says, “ thou who art inebriated, not with the wine of this world’s folly, but with the grace of Divine love, see ! the shower storms of trial are passed and departed, arise, beloved one, and come.” “ I will espouse thee to me for ever, and I will espouse thee in justice, and judgment, and in mercy, and I will espouse thee to me in faith, and thou shalt know that I am thy Lord.” “ Yet a spouse of blood art thou to me, espoused in the day of my reproach.” “ I am jealous of thee with the jealousy of God,” “ for with perpetual love have I loved thee, therefore have I drawn thee to me in the fulness of my compassion for thee.” Mary, mother unstained, if to thy pure bosom one arm clasps the child Jesus, oh, extend the other and receive, protect, and cherish this child of His eternal election.

To a soul which has once been enlightened by the Divine illumination, every other light turns to shadows. To a soul which has felt some little of the fervour and the glow of the Divine goodness, every other joy fades into weariness : there is left in that soul an intense hunger after the fulfilment of all justice, an all-absorbing desire of the possession of God. The broad common way of the commandments will no longer satisfy her ; she loves God with her whole heart and soul, and with all her powers : but, listening to

the Divine exhortation, "Be you perfect as I, your God, am perfect," she would shew the love of her heart in the most perfect manner which the Divine will may please to manifest; she begins to ascend the mountain of the evangelical counsels; she hears Christ proclaiming within the higher regions of her soul, that "the poor in spirit are blessed," and that "the clean of heart shall see God"—and she thirsts to be blessed—she longs to see God. She is all attention, whilst St. Paul exclaims, from those third Heavens where the Son of God has been revealing to him wondrous secrets, that she who remaineth in her virginity thinketh not of this world, but how in holiness of body and of spirit she may please God without impediment—and all her desire is to please God, and to be holy after the manner in which God himself is holy. And now there remains only one thing more to complete the circle of the Heavenly counsels. "If," continues the voice of our dear Lord and Master, "if thou wouldst be perfect, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and taking up thy cross daily, follow me, bearing my reproach, and thou shalt have thy treasure in Heaven." And so taking up, with tears of joy, the cross of her obedience, which crucifies the will of her natural heart, she seeks where He is most to be found; and though the thorns of the rugged path sometimes wound a little the delicate feet of her tenderness, she follows His call, and finds Him to be mostly with the sick and afflicted poor, with little children and with unhappy prisoners. And having already given to them whatsoever she had in possession, having nothing left but the labour of her poor hands and heart, she offers these to them for His sake, and her gratitude to Him that He will condescend to accept them from her. And now, having found Christ where He is most to be found, and having found the way of His most perfect love, but one only thing more remains to make her solicitous; and that is, how she shall be with Him always,

and possess Him for ever. And so with three vows, as with a triple cord, she binds herself a victim to the altar of His cross, and there she is well contented to remain. By the vow of obedience, copying the example of her Divine spouse, who came not to do His own will, but the will of His Heavenly Father; and knowing her self-will to be the root of pride and of every evil thing, she cheerfully buries it in the will of Christ as in a sepulchre. By the vow of chastity, consecrating her undivided heart in its first purity to God. And by the vow of poverty, giving all that she has that Christ may be her only riches—for whom she feels that her heart, however vast and immeasurable be the chambers of its desires, is all too small; nor can she find in it any little corner to spare for the reception of another attachment. And as to the loving labours of her continued obedience, these, she vows and declares, shall be Christ's alone; to whom she cheerfully devotes them in the person of the poor. And now is the bond of her union with the beloved of her soul made perfect. She has become like to Him in all things and has left all, even to the innermost recesses of self-will, and the last fond clingsings of self-love to self, for His only sake: and the Son of God takes unlimited possession of her spirit in all its powers and faculties, gladdening her enlarging soul with His eucharistic presence, inexhaustible in the profusion of His gifts and the revelations of His goodness.

To whom should happiness be given—this spiritual happiness, compared with which the turbid joys of the world are not worth the exertion of a thought—to whom should the peace of God and the clear joys of His Spirit be given, if not to those to whom God has promised a hundred-fold even in this life, for whatever they abandon, though held but in desire?—To whom, if not to those to whom, as generous conquerors of themselves, He has promised the hidden manna of His Spirit?—To whom, if not to those who already anticipate the resurrection—using the world as

though they used it not—dwelling in the body as though the spirit held no converse with the senses—purifying the whole being by prayer, by mortification, and by obedience to the whisperings of grace, until even the flesh becomes in a manner spiritualized, and the purity of the soul imprints itself on the very body ; just as you have seen the sun pour his radiant form through the darkness of the intervening cloud, and over-wrap it with his glory ; living on earth, to use the language of the Divine lips, “ as the angels of God ” in Heaven, holy even as God, by His unapproachable purity and eternal incommunicability, is holy and inaccessible. To others it is given to follow Christ but in part, but, to His chosen spouses, to accompany Him through every path. “ These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, because,” says St. John in the Apocalypse, “ they are virgins.” If Jesus be meek and lowly of heart, if He be poor and simple of spirit ; if Jesus be submissive and obedient, and silent under reproofs ; if He be merciful and compassionate, and all one heart of tenderness overflowing like a fountain with charity ; in these paths all may follow, though not all with the same strength. In these, His hallowed footsteps, all may tread, though all may not fill out the measure of His blessed feet. But Jesus advances on a virginal path ; and “ all,” He says, “ do not take this,” but those to whom the high privilege is given. Born from eternity of the Father, amidst the splendour of the holies, a virgin birth ; He is born, in time, of a virgin mother : He is preceded by a virgin precursor : He lives a virgin life : He admits at the festival of His love His virgin disciple only to the secrets of His bosom : He dies, commending the virgin by excellence to a virgin’s care : He lies buried in a virgin sepulchre. Jesus has no temple so beautiful as the virgin heart which is devoted to Him ; it is like that Holy of Holies, to which, neither the crowd of the world who occupied the outer court nor the chosen few who served the sanctuary had access, but God

alone dwelt therein upon the cherubim, and the abode was filled with the glory of His Majesty.

What is your joy, sacred virgins! in the mysterious union of your souls with God? All things bitter to the senses are turned to sweetness, and all painful labours rendered light and agreeable by that spirit of charity and that view towards God which pervades them all. The world knows nothing of those deep and tranquil joys: holy purity understands them, for she drinks of the torrent at the source. Explain to us, O John! virgin disciple! dearest to our Lord, the chaste joys of the spouses who follow the Lamb. "I heard," he says, "a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder; and the voice which I heard was as the voice of many harpers harping on their harps, and they sung as it were a new canticle before the throne." The voice is one; for there is no division. It is as the sound of many waters; for it is the flood of jubilee in Heaven. It is as the voice of great thunder; for the irrepressible expansion of its joyousness. It is a full choir of harps; for its ravishing harmony. It is a new canticle, always beginning, never ending, and is sung before the throne of God; for it is in the confidence of children in their innocent play before the seat of their Almighty Father. If we ask what that canticle is? "No man can say;" but only "those hundred and forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth;" "these," he says, "are virgins; these follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, purchased from amongst men the first fruits to God and to the Lamb." These only know. All we know is, that it is the enraptured expression of the virgin soul that is filled with ecstatic ardour in the enjoyment of the possession of God.

Courage then, dear sister, courage, and join this innocent troop into whose company you are called. See how that holy company extend from Heaven their arms; "Come," say they, "come offer yourself a sacrifice like us to God

with Him, and come with us, to sing the praises of the Lamb without spot, who, with His blood, has purified the sins of the world." The Agneses, the Agathas, the Cecilians, the Catherines, shew you the place prepared for you amongst them, if you are faithful to that heavenly spouse, to whom the apostle has promised you.

• But here let me pause. A sad thought crosses my spirit and brings trouble to my soul. I cannot enter into the innermost sanctuaries of this sacred subject. I must satisfy myself with this partial view of its outward grandeur. I dare not at present pass beyond the porch. "We preach wisdom," says St. Paul, "but to the perfect, yet not wisdom of this world, for the wisdom of this world knoweth not the things which are of the Spirit of God." The world is clear-sighted and penetrating enough in its own concerns; but flesh never yet saw spirit—and sensual men judge of spirit as though it were flesh, and of grace as though it were nature. They cannot understand what they never yet knew—the mystical illuminations of the Divine Spirit within the secret soul, and the all-subduing powers of grace—powers as real, and incomparably more gigantic in their operations within the soul, than any animal or mechanical power which nature has provided, or which man boasts he has invented for his temporal and material uses. The men of this world imagine a convent to be a gloomy prison, its observances a painful restraint, and its inmates a prey to morbid melancholy and morose misgivings. Well may you smile, devout sisters, who know the reality. And well may your only sadness be, to think that there should be ignorance so impenetrable to the truth. A prison! Why, the world is a prison. Its customs are the chains which its children dare not break! Its craving passions an oppressive tyranny. Its spirit of censure a false and iniquitous judge. Its crimes the executioner within the breast. And its votaries deluded slaves—slaves of habit—slaves of con-

cupiscence—slaves of the fear of men's tongues—and the degraded slaves of every grovelling sense. And fashion is a thief, that steals you both from your time, from yourself, and from your God. And a convent, instead of being a prison, is only a fortress girt round with the discretion of its inmates for the protection and defence of their Christian liberty. For they live in the spirit of that sentence, "Ye are bought with a great price; be not made the slaves of men." And of that other sentence, "If the Son himself deliver you, then are you truly free." And of that sentence, "Where is the Spirit of God, there is liberty." The power of the Divine grace sets free the unimpeded soul, which is espoused to the Author of grace. Devout sisters, you are free from the slavery of sin, by the order of discipline; free from the bondage of the passions, by the mortification of the senses; free from the narrowness of selfishness, by the renunciation of self-will. "When man," observes St. Augustine, "abused his liberty, he lost both himself and it." Yes, he mistook both his nature and his condition. His freedom is not independence, for subjection is essential to the very condition of a creature. What then is true liberty? The first degree of liberty is sovereignty and independence. This belongs to God. The second degree is, to be immediately under God; to depend on God alone; to be attached to God alone; to be enlightened by the knowledge of God; to be animated by the Spirit of God; to be guided by the will of God; to be thus raised by His Spirit above that atmosphere of errors, of prejudices, and of imperfections, which is engendered by the ignorant will of the creature. This is the true freedom of man; who counts it a glory to yield to God, and a debasement to serve the will of the creature. What is the liberty of this world compared to the liberty of the children of God? The man of this world contends and strives to work out the purposes of his own will. Does he always succeed? If he always suc-

ceeds, can he hinder the long train of consequences from which he would so gladly escape? Does not each disorderly act recoil upon himself, and clasp and bind him like a ring of iron, and does not custom harden him like a prison wall into a constraint of dire necessity? "From what profound depths and unsearchable did my free will return to me, oh Lord!" exclaims St. Augustine, "when I began to bow my neck to thy sweet yoke."

What, then, is the end of a religious life? To set the soul at liberty by binding up the senses; to cut off the occasions from concupiscence; to shut up the treasure of grace under the custody of discipline, that it escape not; to seek the watchful eye of superiors in aid of resolution and of security from the delusions of self-love; to deprive ourselves even of things permitted, to the annihilation of self-love, that God may reign; is this to oppose, is it not rather to forward, liberty? You are not opposing the stream, you are not breaking its running waters as with a dike, whilst you merely embank the borders, lest it overflow and waste its waters on the sandy plain; you only give it a deeper and more tranquil bed, and a greater security within its native course. So, do you not destroy the liberty of the soul when you bound it on this side and on that; by such mounds of discretion you withhold it merely from wandering away and from the danger of being lost. This is not to constrain, but to conduct the freedom of the soul. Those lose and destroy their liberty who turn it aside into a thousand petty channels from its natural course, whose tendency should be to go straightforward and majestically unto God. What if society be shut out? Is there not the happy sisterhood, where each countenance reflects the pure affection of the rest, whilst each reveres in each the happy image of God espoused to Christ! The gate that shuts out the joys of this world—falling, fading, and humiliating joys, each the parent of a deeper sorrow—does it not also shut

out the world's passions—care, and fear, and envy, and jealousy, and hatred, and suspicion, and disgust? For *where* the will is all given to God, all locked up in His holy will, and where every act is a sacrifice of obedience, *there* is no selfishness—no dangerous root for the grafting of the spirit of evil—no occasions to invite the turbulent and muddy joys of sense. You hold the deep and tranquil joys of the spirit, in exchange for that false liberty which oppresses the soul until she becomes almost extinct. You have the liberty of the children of God, in which every new limit to the sense gives an enlargement to the heart. Does your religion then, devoted sisters! destroy your natural feelings? No. But gathering the thousand rays of their ardour from the multiplicity of petty objects amongst which they are broken and divided until almost lost, and unscaling them of the false colourings of the senses, they are purified and perfected by the Divine influence, and attracted in all their concentrated force upon the Infinite Being of all excellence—and passion, hope, desire, affection, joy, by the miraculous powers of grace, are blended and flow together towards God in one continued tranquil glow of the Divine love. Whilst the human sympathies, chastened, hallowed, and enhanced, by this continued ascent to the God of all clemency, descend again to seek out misery; and, wherever it is found, present themselves—like angels of mercy, come down from the divine converse to bring relief to every human distress and comfort to every sorrow.

You converse not much with the men of this world, but you hold much converse with the departed spirits of sages and of saints. Every other avenue is closed; but the path to Heaven is open. The feet move not far; but the heart takes the wings of the morning and finds her way into the regions of infinity. The liberty of the person is not great; but the liberty of the soul is only bounded by the circle of eternity. You bear the cross, but the bosom of God

reposes thereon. You need not the consolations of the world, because God is your consolation and your reward exceeding great.

Holy virginity, writes St. Ambrose to his sister, St. Marcella, is that sole virtue to which we invite, without prescribing: it is a vow, not a precept—it is an especial grace to be desired, but is never enjoined: it asks the elect for its votaries, and will have nothing to do with slaves.

A virgin, he says, is a gift of heaven. The glory and joy of her parents, she exercises in her house the priesthood of purity. She is a victim who daily immolates herself to appease the wrath of God by her sacrifice. A virgin is the dear pledge of her family, who never gives them trouble and never brings them sadness.

Every virgin is a queen, both that being consecrated to God, she is espoused to the first of sovereigns, and that, ruling her own passions—which are a shameful servitude—she holds empire over herself.

“Thy lips, O spouse, are as the dropping honey-comb.” It is with profound reason, continues this Father, that the sacred Scripture compares her to the chaste and industrious bee, which feeds on the dews of heaven, and gathers her sweets from the chalices of purest flowers. For thus does the virgin feed on the purest substance of the Divine Word. Her love for purity preserves her stainless. She labours in common, and the fruits of her labour are for the poor; she carefully gathers that flower, of which it is said, “I am the flower of the pasture, and the lily of the valley; I am as a lily in the midst of thorns.” It is the property of this virtue to grow among thorns, with which the spirits of evil encompass her round. Of how many cautions has she therefore need! Take thou then, O virgin, the wings of the spirit, and raise thyself above the flesh, above the eyes, above the pride of this life; go rest thee in the bosom of thy heavenly spouse. Jesus Christ dwells in high places,

and he looks down upon whatever is lowliest. He is like to the cedar of Lebanon, who with his forehead touches heaven, and with his feet plunges deeply within the earth. Seek there, that precious flower—you will find it in the valley of your heart; for she plants herself there in humble souls, and sheds within her perfume.

Since the virgin has received the most abundant graces, the Lord watches his treasure with the greater care, and surrounds her person with stronger protection. He gives for her body-guard a legion of angels, who fight in her defence. Serving under the same standards with the heavenly spirits, it is in nowise astonishing to see them fighting by her side. It is but just she should have those holy spirits for her defenders, whose pure life she imitates. Such are the sublime views which the great St. Ambrose has taken of your holy state.

Let us cultivate, dear sister, that beautiful flower—that lily to which our Saviour and all his saints have delighted to compare the faithful virgin soul—that lily of the Canticles, which shall flourish and bloom in its perfect glory in that kingdom of heaven, in which our Lord is represented as delighting amongst the lilies. Its root is certainly humility, which is planted in the soil of Calvary—that soil, once so barren and desolate, and since so quickened and enriched by those fertilizing streams that ran down the sides of the cross. The stem of this beautiful flower, what is it but rectitude of intention? Its spreading chalice, which so gracefully opens to the influence of heaven, is surely charity. Its protecting leaves, are silence, modesty, and discretion. The delicate bloom, is meekness of spirit. Whilst the pure light which it reflects from the sun in heaven, is the hallowed splendour of purity. This is that virgin flower which our Lord loves, and plants in the garden of his paradise. It can only flourish in the proximity of one other flower. And if you ask me what flower

this is, remember, that it is the flower with drooping head, the rose of Christ, all crimsoned with the blood of his passion.

And now, dear sister in Christ, would you, in conclusion, have some emblem for a perpetual remembrance of this day's generous self-oblation? The lamp which burns in the sanctuary, before which you daily repeat your vows and prayers. It burns a pure and perpetual flame in the Divine Presence. It requires but the act of a moment to enkindle it; and then, without further solicitude, it expends its whole substance to the Divine Honour. So one act of your will enkindles the offering, and then the will itself, your last possession, is flung into the burning sacrifice. Year after year will pass on, and the flame will still unweariedly aspire up to heaven; every act of your hand, every word of your tongue, every thought of your mind, and every feeling of your heart, will but feed its intensity; until your whole substance being consumed to the Divine Honour, and the last embers of your mortality extinct, your spirit, like that consecrated flame, shall become exchanged for a more ethereal, enlarged, and exalted state of existence. For the living breath He gave, expiring in His honour, will return again to God to receive her transformation at His hands.

And now, let my words no longer detain you from your happiness. How far more powerfully has that Divine Word, who is the only true preacher, been all this while conversing within your breast. Approach more near unto God. Sacrifice to His glory a sacrifice of praise, and pay to the Most High your vows. And thou, Church of Australia, rejoice! Let thy people be glad, and thy priests give praise, and thy pontiff raise his consecrated hands in thanksgiving. Thou art no longer desolate, no longer a reproach; neither the lily of purity will be wanting to thy flowers, nor the olive of peace to thy goodly trees. And

now, all is prepared. The altar, which represents the cross—the great victim, with whom amidst the tremendous mysteries you are to be offered up—the bridegroom, Christ, our dear Lord, who, with His infinite love invites you—the fire, which is the charity of His spirit—the incense, which is the desire of your heart commingled with its prayers; and the sword, the drawing of which is the resolution of your will. The sacred pontiff has enveloped you in the mysterious veil which seals your virginity and shrouds you from the world. He has placed on your finger the hallowed ring which binds you to the love of Christ. He has delivered to you the consecrated cross, whose bitter sweets are to be your trial on earth, as its effulgence is designed to be your standard in eternity. Approach into the sanctuary of holiness, spouse, at once of Christ, victim of charity, and holocaust of praise. Holy, peaceful, eternal spirit! descend upon her in the innocent and tender form of the dove! Approach into the sanctuary of holiness. Expire in the spirit of the death of Christ—expire to this world. Arise, in the spirit of His resurrection, arise to the newness of His life. Happy vocation! To consecrate your whole being to God. Happy solemnization! To be immolated in the very ardours of charity. Happy hour—hour only to be equalled and surpassed by that, when, unveiled of the remains of your mortality, your spirit shall present herself before His Eternal presence in the Heavenly Courts, and see Him face to face, whom only are you, henceforth, to know, here invisibly in the communings of your own heart, and visibly in the countenances of the poor. One precious word from the lips of the Heavenly spouse, and I have done. He addresses it to you from the midst of that glorious vision, which opened this discourse—“BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE TO THEE A CROWN OF LIFE.”

THE CEREMONY OF BLESSING
 AND
 LAYING THE FOUNDATION-STONE
 OF
 A NEW CHURCH.

THE substance of the following discourse was delivered to the faithful of Parramatta, on the Sunday previous to the laying the foundation of their present church, in the year 1836. It was consequently preached to a congregation almost enveloped in the darkness of the catacombs, in that long room over the "Old Gaol," already commemorated; almost every ray of light we enjoyed streaming in from an opening behind the back of the preacher, and flickering the candles of the altar, whilst it strangely illuminated the first row of features in the audience, and threw the speaker's form into strong deep shadow. Such was the idea of the misery of this ruin, long used for our holiest solemnities, that when, on one occasion, a devout Catholic lady, on a visit to Government House, from Sydney, good-humouredly persisted, against all the remonstrance of her Protestant friends, to

hear mass, as a matter of course, notwithstanding all the representations made to her of the darkness, dirtiness, and want of every accommodation, which characterized this gaol, guard-room, and chapel, for it came legitimately under all these designations; the colonel of the regiment stationed in the town would not be satisfied unless she were almost surrounded by a kneeling body-guard of Catholic serjeants. I need not add, that this precaution was neither necessary nor desired by my devout friend. These anecdotes are in themselves trifling, but they illustrate the beginnings of the Australian church, and a state of things which, though of recent date, has passed away.

The discourse was afterwards published in Sydney, by way of introduction to "The Ceremony of Blessing and Laying the Foundation-stone of a New Church," which the author, at the request of the bishop, translated and published for the use of the colonists. It was no sooner published, than taken in hand by the principal minister of the Scottish church in the colony, who, citing the opening words—"Ceremonies are the religion of the body"—without completing the sentence, which goes on to say, that they are the religion of the body, "as faith is the religion of the mind, and prayer, &c. the religion of the heart;" without making the slightest reference to any part of the explanatory context, assumed, on the authority of the writer, that ceremonies were the religion, not of the body of man, but of the body Catholic;

and, upon the foundation of this pun, garble, or whatever rhetoricians may be pleased to call the figure, laid with all due gravity, was built up by this divine an imposing fabric of grave argument and of solemn, alternating with ludicrous, invective against Catholicism. The author of this singular specimen of controversial ingenuity was the Rev. Dr. Lang, who is well known to fame, as the author of the "Historical Account of New South Wales," in which he has celebrated his controversial achievements, of "Polynesian Researches," &c.

THE

FOUNDATION-STONE OF A CHURCH.

CEREMONIES may be said to be the religion of the body, as faith is the religion of the mind, and prayer and love of God the religion of the heart; that the whole man be subject in homage to God. Were we pure spirits, remarks St. Chrysostom, our religion would be purely spiritual. But our spirit being placed in the midst of sense, encircled by sense, and conversing through sense, our religion is of necessity both spiritual and sensible. Having outward relations with our fellow-creatures, as well as inward relations with God, those outward relations can only be satisfied by the outward and sensible expression of our inward dispositions. "With the heart," says St. Paul, "it is believed unto justice, whilst with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Therefore, came the Eternal Son of the Father to our aid, redemption, and example, not a spirit only addressing himself to our spirits, but a mortal man also of flesh and blood, made visible and approachable to all mankind, subjecting himself to the outward ceremonies of the law, submitting himself to the ceremonial baptism of John, with the view to "fulfil all justice," performing various ceremonies before the eyes of men in the exercise of his power and authority, and by his command constituting ceremonies to be exercised by the ministers of His church, unto the end

of time. That, remembering, in the language of St. Paul, how we were bought with a great price, "we may glorify God in our body," after His example, and that "those members which have served iniquity, may now serve justice unto sanctification."

Religious ceremonies are the outward signs of our inward acts and desires—they are corporeal acts expressive of spiritual truths. They are the body of religion, and manifest the presence of its soul, as the humanity of our Lord gave us manifestation of the presence of His Divinity. They form a universal language, in which soul may speak to soul, and many souls in unison may speak to God. Whenever the mind is deeply impressed, and the heart quickened into strong emotion, their expression mantles the countenance and informs and animates the whole man. The truth, the feeling, and the grace, are not buried in the individual, but overflow through the senses in confession, encouragement, and support to our fellow-men. Thus the devotion of each is partaken by all, whilst the united devotion of a whole congregation becomes a fund of edification for each one of its members. And, if the stranger enters, as St. Paul remarks, "he is convinced of all—the secrets of his heart are made manifest, and, falling with his face on the earth, he adores."

When the soul is full of God, she stops not here, she comes to see religion in all things; every being that is around her is made to partake of her sanctity; she would have all things blessed, and all devoted unto God; the very insensible things become animate, and seem to live to join her in her devotion; every creature is made an instrument on which to hymn the praises of God. And whoever would have things otherwise, must first interrupt and break asunder the essential ties and relations which bind the whole creation together towards their Sovereign Lord and Ruler. They must suppress that Spirit of the Lord which

fills the world and holds the knowledge of His voice. They must suppress the inspiring Scriptures and the voices of those prophets, who, the more they glow with God, the more earnestly and fervently do they call upon all the creatures of God, and assembling them as it were around them to the aid of their sublime ministry, give even to the insensible things of the world a life and intelligence to praise the God of Heaven, and to proclaim His truths and benefits to men; they must suppress those divine psalms which animate and personify the heavens and the earth, and all the things within them, that they may give glory and benediction unto God; they must suppress the magnificent revelations of the Apocalypse, in which the whole court of heaven is displayed in its employments to our understanding, through the illustration of earthly ceremonies; they must suppress the mind of St. Paul, and even nature herself in her sublimest words, when, inspired by grace, "her heart and her flesh exult towards the living God," and she calls upon every creature to do honour to His name.

All our public acts of religion are performed with ceremonies expressive of their nature. These add solemnity to them; they render them more impressive; they awaken the interest of the indifferent, they attract the attention of the careless, they fix the wanderings of the distracted, they reanimate the devotion of the languid, they instruct the ignorant, and unite those who, in the name of God, are collected together in one act of simultaneous devotion. The solemnity of the ceremonial is of necessity increased with the solemnity of the occasion. The building a Christian church is a great act of religion; of mere works performed by the hand of man, there is none greater: it is at once an act of mercy, of charity, and of devotion; and being a work for God, it should have its beginnings from God. We, therefore, invoke the Divine blessing upon its very

commencement ; we offer it to Him from the first ; we implore His aid ; we commit to His kind providence its progress and completion ; praying that, our intentions being purified, it may be found acceptable in his sight, through that great Saviour whose personal presence it is destined to receive.

The blessing and laying the first stone of a church belong, appropriately, to the bishop, to whose decision its site, plan, and all its provisions are subject. The church, and each of its parts, and every rite of religion, have reference to, and are subordinate to, the great sacrifice. In the place of the future altar, therefore, the cross of Christ is first of all planted ; and we pray, in the beautiful language of ancient simplicity, that here, where the merits of his sufferings are to be dispensed in grace to his people, the destroying angel may never enter, but all spiritual wickedness be for ever banished : and that, as he perfected the preparations and desires of David in the Temple, built by Solomon his son, so he would deign to accomplish our desires, through Christ our Lord. Christ is then prayed to confirm and to bless the first stone, as an earnest of the good work, and it is signed with the cross of salvation in the name of the adorable Trinity. It is now prayed, that those who, from pure motives, contribute their aid to this building, may enjoy health of body and strength of soul ; and the Litany of the Saints is sung or said, that heaven may join with earth to obtain of God the effect of these supplications. Next, the Almighty is still prayed to complete what has been begun, and the stone is placed in the name of the most Holy Trinity, that the true faith, and the fear of God, and brotherly love may there flourish ; the eternal peace of the eternal God is invoked upon the place ; He is entreated to bless, to sanctify, and to consecrate it to His name ; a hymn of joy follows ; and then, God is again prayed to preserve the structure inviolate ; and looking

from the beginning of this church to all those churches throughout the world to which by this solemn action it has been united, with the eyes of Catholic faith, the universality of the faithful is commemorated. The bishop then imparts his solemn benediction to the faithful, and the ceremony is concluded.

During the progress of the work, the 126th Psalm, "Unless the Lord build the house, in vain do they labour who strive to build it up," &c., is added to the public service, to express our reliance on God for its completion. And then is celebrated the solemn dedication of the church, and the still more solemn consecration of the altar.

Thus is the work of God made His own from the beginning. "Every creature of God," says St. Paul, "is good with a blessing." All those things are therefore blessed which are set apart and assigned to sacred uses and purposes, being thus released by prayer and the power of God, from that vanity and unfitness of which St. Paul speaks, to which, with man since his fall, "every creature is made subject, even until now."

Although God himself stands in no need of temples made with hands, yet must we confess that we ourselves for many reasons need them. The first churches, in the apostolic times, were formed out of private dwellings, given up by the devotion of the more wealthy of the faithful for this especial purpose. In the second century, and before the persecution of Dioclesian, we find the followers of Christ building churches openly, and these were more generally raised over the tombs of the Martyrs, and were thence called "The place of the Martyr," or, "The memory of the Martyr." They were dedicated to God, either under the name of that martyr, or under the name of an apostle or other saint. The remains of the martyrs still repose within the altars of all our churches. The figures under which St. John, in the 4th, 6th, and 7th chapters of the Apoca-

lypse, represents the glories of heaven as shewn to him in a vision, are in such close accordance with the descriptions of the Christian churches and their solemn service, as described by St. Justin, who himself was a martyr of the second century, as also by others of the earliest Fathers, that it is clear they were derived from the first assemblies of the faithful, which, by their order, beauty, unity, and charity, are so emblematic of heaven. St. John speaks of a throne on which is seated the President of the Assembly—the Bishop : of the seats ranged on each side for the four and twenty elders, in white garments—the priestly choir : in the midst, before the throne, he sees an altar, on which is “ the Lamb standing, as it were slain ”—the perpetual victim. There also is the Book of Prophecy, and the four evangelists allegorically depicted. Beneath the altar the apostle sees the souls of the martyrs. Before the throne burn seven lamps, and before the altar stands an angel, offering, under the emblem of incense, “ the prayers of the saints ”—the devotions of the people. The elders, or priests, are heard singing praises in honour of the Lamb that is sacrificed ; and the many angels who praise and bless around, represent the assembled multitude of believers. St. John speaks further of a source of life-giving waters—the font of baptism. How beautiful is this vision of St. John ! How accurately does he picture the assemblies of the Catholic Church, then, and to this day. How entirely have they fulfilled the divine injunction, “ Do this in memory of me.” “ Do according to the pattern which I shewed you in the Mount.” And “ as often as you do this, you shall shew the death of the Lord until He come.”

But it was in the beginning of the fourth century that churches arose in their full splendour. The faithful, now relieved from the pressure of persecution, vied on every side to shew the extent of their faith, and to manifest their deep veneration for the mysteries of religion. Then the ceremo-

nies of religion found room to expand themselves to their full expression. All the externals of religion unfolded themselves together, as security arose before the receding of oppression. Always in substance the same, they grow to the growth of the temple, to the means of the faithful, and to the importance of their numbers; and, from this period, they have undergone but little and no material change.

The people accounted it a great honour that God should allow them to build a church to his name. Their best of every thing was devoted to Him and to His altar, after the example of the children of Israel when God first chose to dwell in a tabernacle amongst men. When, "The Lord spake to Moses, saying: Speak to the children of Israel that they bring first-fruits to me; of every man who offers of his own accord, you shall take them. And these are the things you must take: gold and silver and brass; violet and purple, and scarlet twice dyed; and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and violet skins, and Setim wood; oil to make lights; spices for ointment, and for sweet-smelling incense; onyx stones to adorn the ephod and the rational. And they shall make me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in the midst of them."—Exod. ch. xxv. And in chs. xxv. and xxvi., we are told that "all the multitude of the children of Israel, going out from the presence of Moses, offered first-fruits, and dedicated voluntary offerings to the Lord, with a most ready and devout mind, to make the work of the tabernacle, and whatsoever was necessary to the service and the holy vestments; and whilst the workmen were earnest at the work, the people daily in the morning offered their vows; until having, in the fulness of their zeal, brought more than was found sufficient, they were commanded by Moses to cease from their offering.

In this spirit did our fathers build their churches; they

were the work of faith animated by devotion; and this is the secret of their grandeur. May their devotion be ours! Like these children of Israel, and like our fathers, the children of Christ, let each one have a share in the tabernacle, that all may receive a blessing; each according to his possessions—those who have not gold, giving silver, and those who have not silver, offering brass: not from constraint, but like them, voluntarily; not from vanity, but from devotion; not reluctantly, but with a most willing mind, “for the Lord loveth the cheerful giver.”

How beautiful is the exhortation of St. John Chrysostom to the Christians of the fourth century, to build churches in every town and village.

“If (he says) you have any thing for the poor, give it for this purpose, it is better thus. If you marry, or if you apportion a daughter, give a dower also to the church, and the place will be filled with blessings upon you. What good will not follow? Is it a little thing to have your wine-press blessed? Is it a small thing that God should accept the first of your fruits as his lot? This is useful to the peace of those who till the earth. The priest will henceforth be venerable, and this will add security to the town. There prayers will be offered for you perpetually, and the oblation be made each Sunday. Some build splendid sepulchres, that posterity may hear of their fame; are these to be most admired, or you who raise up churches? Only think, you will have a reward even to the coming of Christ, if you build an altar to his name. Tell me, should the emperor command you to prepare a house for him to dwell amongst you, would you not set every means in motion? But now it is the kingly church of Christ which you build. Do not reckon the expense, but count the fruit. Whilst others cultivate the earth, do you cultivate their souls. They bring you the fruit of the earth, do you carry them to heaven. He who begins the work is the cause of

all. What a thing is it to go and enter the house of God and see that even you build it; to cast yourself down, and after that repose of body, to be present at the morning and evening hymns. To have the priest with you in your dwelling and conversing with you; to enjoy his blessing; to see others coming in to share this with you. This is a wall of security—this the protection of your possessions—this that field of which it was said, ‘The odour of the full field which the Lord has blessed.’ Then the town is good on account of rest. Having a church, it is like the paradise of God. There is no clamour, no tumult, no wrangling enemies, no divisions; all see each other to be friends, and partakers of the same belief. Repose brings you reflection; and the priest taking you in your hour of seriousness, easily cures you. For what we say in the church, that you speak of out of doors when you meet your friends, and it is thus fixed in your mind. You become another man at your labour through him; for he watches over you, and is your guardian. Tell me, what is the expense? Build the house; another will add the porch. Give a little, and you will receive the reward of the whole. Make a beginning, lay the foundation, exhort one another to contribute, strive together in concert. Where straw and wheat and such things are to be secured, houses are quickly raised up; but when the fruits of souls are to be gathered in, men are careless! O what a good is it to enter with the great tranquillity of the priests into the church, to approach to God! Is it a small thing, pray tell me, to have your names remembered in the sacred oblations? What a profit to you and to all! The place will be cleared of all suspicion, there will be no homicide, there no theft. And there is another consolation, in case sickness or death should come upon you. Where God is honoured there is no evil; where He is not honoured there is no good. If any one separate the precious from the vile, he shall be as the mouth of God; they who profit so many

souls in their own and in future times, even to the coming of Christ, how much of God's clemency shall they not enjoy? Raise a fortress against the devil, for such is the church. Let your hands proceed hence to their labour, first extend them here in prayer, and then to their daily work; and you shall enjoy strength of body and much husbandry, and all evil will be put out of doors. Say not you have no profit, you reap no return. Is it no return to bring souls into the heavenly garner? Ah, indeed! Is it no profit to gain souls? Hear what Christ says to Peter: 'If you love me, feed my sheep.' You collect together the flock of Christ, and set over them a pastor; and is this nothing? What do I say? If those who scandalize one are so punished, how will they who save many be rewarded? From the punishment of him who scandalizes, learn the reward of him who saves. Knowing these things, let us give ourselves strenuously to the spiritual work, let each one call upon me, and let us work together with all our might, that being in every part pleasing to God, we may obtain eternal good things, by the grace and favour of our Lord Jesus Christ."—St. Chrysost. Hom. 18, in Act. Apost.

When you thus, with a pure mind, contribute to the building of a church, remember that you perform a solemn act of religion, and, "honour the Lord with your substance:" you shew your gratitude to the giver of all good gifts; you do an act of charity to your own soul; you perform an act of piety towards your children; you exercise a noble work of spiritual mercy to your neighbour; you increase the honour of God's name; you co-operate with him in the divinest of all divine things—the salvation of souls.

"This is the house of God and the gate of heaven."

Here is a haven of peace from the world when it rages. Here is a retreat from the ways of wicked men who vex the soul. How beautifully did the first Christians call their church the house of the dove! Here will rise the cross of Christ;

and on this calvary you will lay down your sins in sorrow, that they may be washed at the fountain of those ever-flowing wounds. Here will be the sanctuary, and He who, in a truer sense than in the old law, sanctifies it; “descending in the cloud on the propitiatory between the cherubim.” In the sanctuary will be the altar, and on the altar “the Lamb standing for ever slain.” And the priest in white robes bending before it, and pouring much prayer—and the people spread around all reddened with that blood. Here will be broken the bread of life; here will your soul be fed with truth; here will flow the waters of salvation. Here will your children be born again to God; here will they learn to walk uprightly before him; here will they be united in holy bands; and your children’s children, and those who come after them, and they will say,—Our fathers prayed here, and in this place they were enlightened and sanctified, and here were they purified for their passage. Hallowed be the spot! They built this house with toil and sacrifice. Blessed be their memory! We reap the fruit of their labour. Let us be grateful to their souls. The stranger will enter and bless your charity. And the converted will thank you for their salvation.

How holy is the house of God when built by the devotion of the people and cemented by their prayers: the stones of which are the gift of their faith; their arrangement, the expression of their subordination; their coherence, the unity of their spirit. It ascends towards heaven an emblem of their aspirations, a sign of their hope, and a monument of their charity. A figure of those to whom St. Paul said, “Ye are the building of God.” For the august sacrifice, it is a worthy temple; for the devotion of the people, a house of prayer; for the body of Christ, a basilica or kingly mansion; for the remains of the martyrs, a chamber of repose; for unhappy men—“the sick, the blind, the lame, and withered”—a Bethesda, with its porches and pool,

and the messenger of God stirring into life the healing waters; for the preaching of the faith, a church of God; a tabernacle wherein God dwells with men; a fold for the feeding of the flock; a fortress against the powers of darkness;—to the afflicted, throwing open a refuge;—to the sinner, a door of repentance;—and to the saint, the gate of heaven.

h. p. j. c. x. 1851
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